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Midwest China Oral History Interviews

Wibora Muehlenbein

WIBORA MUEHLENBEIN

ORAL HISTORY ABSTRACT

BORN: July 21, 1905, in Menasha, Wisconsin.

EARLY LIFE: family background; education; how Benedictines became involved in China at Fu Jen University, Peking; trip to Peking, 1930.

CHINA EXPERIENCES: cultural adjustments to living in Peking; Benedictine sisters establish senior middle school for women; Chinese government requirements for bestowing the title of "university" upon Fu Jen; female students at Fu Jen; Benedictines leave Fu Jen due to financial problems; accepts position in Kaifeng, Honan; description of Benedictines working in Honan; establishment of a dispensary by the Benedictine sisters in Kaifeng; establishment and functions of the ecumenical International Relief Committee, formed 1937; Japanese take Kaifeng; internment in Kaifeng and in the Presbyterian compound at Weihsien; communications between Weihsien and the outside world; religious and other activity in Weihsien; trip to and lifestyle during internment in Peking; returns to Kaifeng at war's end to reclaim Benedictine property, 1945; difficulties resettling at the mission; language study in China; memories of the Jewish community in Kaifeng; Communist activity in China during the 1930s and 1940s; Benedictines leave China, 1948; work begun in Taiwan.

INTERVIEWER: Jane Baker Koons

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INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWER: Sister, would you begin by telling us where and when you were born?

MUEHLENBEIN: I was born in Menasha, Wisconsin in 1905, July 21st.

I: Could you give us a little information on your family background?

MUEHLENBEIN: Three of my grandparents were from Germany. My father's mother was born in the States, but she also was of German background. My mother's family lived on a farm. My father's father died when he was 14 years old. He was the oldest of seven children, so he went out then to earn his own living, mostly working in meat markets. By the time he married at the age of 27, he owned his own meat market, and so we're a family that's hard on meat!

I: Would you describe your educational background, please?

MUEHLENBEIN: When I was six years old we moved to a small town near Eau Claire--Boyd, Wisconsin. That spring I went to a kind of preschool. Then in the following fall, I entered the parochial school, St. Joseph's School. I graduated from the eighth grade in 1919 and that fall I went to a boarding school called St. Mary's Academy near Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Two years later I graduated from a business course there. That fall I went to St. Benedict's where I finished my high school and began my college and received the habit in 1923.

I: Would you explain how you decided to become a Benedictine sister?

MUEHLENBEIN: I remember I was about four years old when I saw some sisters, and I said to myself right then and there, "I'm going to be a sister." Of course what kind, I didn't know. During my grade school, oh, I was very much interested in the

mission magazines,both those that the school had and those that my parents received. So I was only a grade school student when I told my younger sister, "I'm going to be a missionary sister." Then I went to St. Mary's Academy, which was under the Benedictine sisters, and there I decided to go to St. Benedict's. My sister said to me,"But what about being a missionary sister?" I just kind of shrugged because I felt I belonged to St. Benedict. When our community was offered this chance in 1929 to go to China. I was one of the first to volunteer. Mother Louise Walz, in a couple of months, had 100 volunteers on her list. I happened to be one of the six chosen.

I: How much did you know about the Catholic mission work, specifically in China, before you actually made the decision to go?

MUEHLENBEIN: As I said, any mission magazine that I got hold of I read from cover to cover, and I was especially interested in the Chinese stories and the Chinese mission.

I: Had you had any contact with missionaries who had worked in China?

MUEHLENBEIN: No, not definitely. Missionaries came around, but I mean not a very definite contact.

I: Would you explain how the Benedictine sisters were made this offer to begin this work in China?

MUEHLENBEIN: In 1924, Pius XI had invited the Benedictine fathers to begin a Catholic university called Fu Jen University in Peking. In 1929 when they decided they had to have a section for women also, they decided to ask our community because we were the largest group of Benedictine sisters in the States. We went out there really to work with the Benedictine fathers--we usually do. The fathers are usually there first, and the sisters follow.

I: How was it that the Benedictine fathers were invited to begin this university in 1924?

MUEHLENBEIN: Two Chinese scholars, one by the name of Ying Chien Chi and the other by the name of Chen Yuan, asked the Pope to authorize a university under Catholic auspices. The Pope decided on the Benedictine fathers and he asked (what we call our archabbey) St. Vincent's Archabbey at Latrobe, Pennsylvania, to take it over. So the first men went out in 1924. But in Kaifeng, Honan, there were three young American priests who had come out in 1920. In 1926 they had to leave Kaifeng because of the Communist approach and they went up to Peking and joined the university. Really the first of these fathers, including Father Francis Clougherty, were in China from 1920. But the Benedictines from St. Vincent's came in 1924.

I: Did the Benedictine fathers have particular skills or interests that would make their involvement in a university particularly useful?

MUEHLENBEIN: Almost every abbey in the States, including St. John's, Collegeville, Minnesota, had its own school such as St. John's University. St. Vincent's had its college, also. There was just one drawback to the arrangement and that is what we call the Benedictine organization, a family organization. That is to say, each abbey is independent. There is no centralized government like there is in other communities, like the Franciscans and the Jesuits. When St. Vincent's took this, they could send their men as they pleased. They could ask other abbeys for men, but they couldn't demand men. Although there were men at the university from other abbeys including one from Belgium and one from England, these men were under St. Vincent's when they were working there.

The whole financial burden fell on St. Vincent's and, as I said, they couldn't force any other abbey to help them financially and they couldn't force any other abbey to give them a particular man that they needed. They were all volunteers from the other abbeys and in the end that was the trouble--financially. St. Vincent's, with about 200 priests and a large college of their own, just simply couldn't take on the burden financially or the burden of men when Fu Jen got so large. The organization that followed the Benedictine's was the Society of the Divine Word, known as the SVD. They have a very, very centralized organization; a man can be sent from any part of the world to any other part of the world. Their finances all go together, and so for them it was a much easier thing. They already had universities in the East, in Japan, and in the Philippines, so it was a better set up for them than it was for the Benedictines.

I: Before both the Benedictine fathers and sisters got involved in China, how foreign mission oriented was your order?

MUEHLENBEIN: The Benedictines, from the very foundation in the end of the fifth century or beginning of the sixth century, were so-called missionaries. There is hardly a country in Europe that doesn't have a Benedictine as the founder of its Christianity: St. Boniface to Germany from England, example. And the same with other countries. So they had always been spreading out. In the States we had been founded from houses in Germany and Switzerland and so on. We hadn't spread out for missions yet at that time; at least, I don't think the fathers had, and I know the sisters hadn't. Now almost every monastery or abbey, almost every group of sisters has some foreign mission work. But in those days we just had gotten to the point of being established ourselves and we were not spreading out yet from America.

I: How did you relate to what the Maryknoll fathers and sisters were doing? Were they already a mission organization by that time?

MUEHLENBEIN: Yes, they were a mission organization. Their first priests and sisters went to China, I think, around 1920. The Society of the Divine Word, although it was a world-wide organization not simply a U. S. organization, already had men working there--including some Americans. One of the first priests we met there was Father King, a member of the Divine Word Society. Their men all worked together. The SVDs might have six men with some six different nationalities working together while the Maryknoll were definitely Americans. They were the first Catholic foreign missionary society founded in the United States.

I: Sister, will you describe in a little more detail how the call actually came to the Benedictine sisters; why they thought they needed you and how the response was?

MUEHLENBEIN: As I mentioned before, Father Francis Clougherty had been in China since 1920. He had joined the Benedictines in 1926. In 1929 the Benedictines celebrated the 14th centenary of the founding of Monte Casino, one of the monasteries in Italy. Father Francis went to Italy for that celebration and saw Pius XI and Pius XI discussed it with him and suggested that they take Benedictine sisters to work with them for the women's section. So on his way back to China, Father Clougherty stopped at St. Benedict's. He talked to the community there and to the chapter. At that time I was at the University of Minnesota during the summer months. The news came down to me that he had talked and our chapter had voted to accept. I immediately wrote to Mother and said I wanted to volunteer. (Afterwards I had heard that she had said to wait two weeks and to pray before you volunteer, so I wrote another letter volunteering!) The rest of the year it was a question, "Who is going? Who is going?" By spring the names came out and I was one of them.

I: And there were six selected to be a part of this regional group?

MUEHLENBEIN: Yes, that's right.

I: Would you give the names of the other five people besides yourself?

MUEHLENBEIN: Sister Francetta Vetter was the superior. She was the head of the home economics department at the College of St. Benedict's Sister Regia Zens, who was in charge of the kitchen at St. Benedict's at the time, and was chosen so that she could take care of the rest of us. Then there was another teacher from St. Benedict's, a language teacher, Sister Donalda Terhaar. And the other three of us were teaching at high schools. In those days we had several high schools. Sister Ronayne Gergen was teaching at Cathedral High School in St. Cloud. Sister Rachel Loulan was teaching at our high school at Wahpeton, North Dakota, and I was teaching at our high school at Cold Spring.

I: What was the response of your family and your colleagues to your going to China?

MUEHLENBEIN: The sisters, of course, were all excited--if that's what you mean by my colleagues! Everybody was wishing that they had been chosen, those who had volunteered. There is one old sister here now--she is walking around all bent over; she keeps on telling me every time she sees me (if she knows me) that I took her place in China. She wanted to go and I was chosen instead! My family--there the problem was that I had not been told officially, so I didn't think I should say anything to my family. In the meantime, somebody else told them. They found out before I told them officially and they were a little upset about that. But otherwise they were completely willing to have me go. (Both Dad and Mother were very good Catholics.)

I: Sister, when you thought about what you were going to do, what was your vision of what you thought you could do in China and for the Chinese?

MUEHLENBEIN: We knew we were going to go and teach. As Father Clougherty had explained it, there were plenty of missionaries doing other work like in the interior, and having dispensaries and things like that, but that no one was really working with the educated class. That was their purpose in founding the university. That's why those two scholars asked for it because they wanted the Catholic missions to do more work with the educated class.

I: Why were the two scholars particularly interested in having Catholics begin the university?

MUEHLENBEIN: Ying Chien Chi came from an old Catholic family. He was a knight of St. Gregory, the highest honor the Pope can bestow on a layman. Chen Yuan was not a Catholic. He was a history scholar and as such must have known much of the history of the Catholic Church. Both men were intensely interested in a good moral education for the youth of China. Chen Yuan was chancellor of the university when we got there.

There was a university in Shanghai founded by the Jesuits--Aurora. But outside of that there wasn't very much done in the line of education for the upper class.

I: What class were the other Christian colleges and universities serving?

MUEHLENBEIN: One must remember that in those days transportation in China was not what it was later. Aurora University in Shanghai was therefore "far" from the north. A need was felt for another Catholic school in the north. I imagine the other Christian colleges and universities had the same goals as Fu Jen.

I: Why did the Benedictine fathers, once they themselves had gotten started, think that it was good for you to work with the girls? Did they have particular motives or particular interests?

MUEHLENBEIN: Their school was only for boys, you see. They felt they couldn't accomplish the work that the school should do if there wasn't a section for women. Educate the boys and not educate the women; that wasn't exactly the proper thing to be doing.

I: Before you left, Sister, did you receive any kind of special training?

MUEHLENBEIN: No. In those days we didn't. I didn't know I was going, definitely, until May and then we left the end of August. All that time was taken up with getting ready and visiting our relatives and so on. So we had no training. It was planned that we would have a year of language study and so on when we got there, but we didn't have any before we left.

I: What did you know about the political and social situation before you left? You were coming right at the end when there had been a mass exodus of foreigners.

MUEHLENBEIN: Yes. As I said, I always have read a great deal, whether it was the mission magazines or whether it was the papers or anything. So I knew about the warlords and Chiang's attempt to unify China and the Communist trouble and so on. Of course, from the time you set foot on China, you couldn't miss it. The day we went up from Tientsin to Peking, we had to wait again and again as troop trains passed us going up north to Manchuria. Chang Tso-lin was in control up there at the time. Socially, I didn't know much about their social customs or anything of that kind. We learned gradually.

I: Would you describe your journey to China? Did you have certain things happen that were particularly eventful as you were traveling to China?

MUEHLENBEIN: On the way to China? First of all it was Honolulu which, of course, was all new to us. This was 1930, and we went via the Empress of Japan, a big Canadian ship on its first trip across the Pacific. It had come across the Atlantic, but it hadn't gone across the Pacific. Then we had a couple of days in Japan, and from Kobe we took a Japanese boat and went through to the Inland Sea. Finally, this little Japanese boat went through a typhoon, and we didn't know whether we were coming out of that alive or not. One of the sisters said, "If we go down, I hope they don't pull us out because I can't imagine anything worse than a bedraggled nun!"

We finally got into Tientsin on the evening of the 24th of September. That was an experience--to have this boat come up and all these people on the shore, and everybody fighting to get on the boat at once. I suddenly realized that these were men who wanted to carry baggage. We were only about 12 first-class passengers and the rest a lot of steerage passengers. I decided I was staying in the door of our cabin and I wasn't going to let anybody in. This Chinese man came along, very polite and very insistent. I couldn't speak any Chinese and I don't think he could speak any English. Finally, someone said in English behind me, "It's all right, Sister. He's from the mission and he'll take care of everything." So he did. He took care of everything that night (and he really took care of it) and the next morning he got it on the train for us.

We spent our first night in China in Tientsin with the French sisters and again there was a language difficulty. We had spent our time with French sisters in Kobe, also. We didn't know their language and they didn't know ours.

I: You left immediately for Peking as soon as you arrived?

MUEHLENBEIN: Yes. Just one night in Tientsin and then we went to Peking and got there just about noon. The Chinese countryside was different than what we were used to. All these little village houses with mud walls and the little flat fields with the burial mounds. We didn't know what they were and had to ask. We thought that was very fitting that they would be there right in their own field; ancestors buried in their own fields.

I: Would you continue to describe some of your first impressions of China and some of the adjustments you had to make?

MUEHLENBEIN: As I said, we got to Peking around noon. The first things were these great big, big walls and that great, big Chien Min Gate. They were something different than we had ever experienced before. The fathers had people there to meet us; they had cars to take us, they had our home all prepared, and they had a cook there and a meal for us. But that home was so different from anything we had ever seen. We simply went in through a gate, and here was a small Chinese courtyard. You went through another gate and here was a big Chinese courtyard--and then another Chinese courtyard--and finally, a back gate. It sounds like a big layout, but it wasn't because these Chinese buildings were each one room, except where you put in partitions part way up. The courtyards were paved with stone and no greens--nothing. It was different than what we had expected. The windows were paper. I don't know if you have ever seen those Chinese paper windows? And part of the door was paper; so that was really different than what we had expected.

I: During your first years what were some of the adjustments you continued to make and perhaps some of the difficulties you had to overcome in getting used to your new life in China?

MUEHLENBEIN: Of course, there was a language problem. We couldn't speak any Chinese. Professors and their families from the university--some of those would come to see us and they could speak English. I know one family, the father was a professor at the university and he spoke perfect English, but the mother spoke no English. Two of the daughters were in the States at Rosary College in Illinois, going to school. When one of them finished, she married a Chinese doctor from the University of Chicago. The two of them came back and they stopped in Canton to see his folks. His parents could not speak Pekingese and she could not speak Cantonese. She said all they could do was smile at each other. Then they came up to Peking. Her father was all right; he spoke English! But the doctor couldn't speak Pekingese, so he couldn't speak to her mother! Those were language difficulties like that.

We lived in our house where we had our own cook and our own food, but we soon learned about Chinese food. The day we arrived a family came to see us, whose daughter was going to school at the College of St. Benedict's and they invited us to dinner. There was a 16-year-old boy who was married to a 15-year-old niece of this girl at St. Benedict's. He was the only one of that whole, big group, about 10 of them, who could speak any English. They wanted us to come to dinner on Monday. We told them no; we didn't know yet that when you say no to a Chinese it isn't no and that they think you're just being polite.

The next day a very official invitation came. Sister Francetta answered that invitation saying that we couldn't come because two sisters were sick. Monday noon here comes in this lad: "Two sisters sick. I come to get four sisters for dinner." We had to go. We went to a Chinese restaurant with the kitchen at the front so we could see the food preparation. That was different. Then the food--we used chopsticks--we had never used chopsticks; we had never seen them.

Anyhow we got through the dinner. Afterwards, after I had been in China for a while, I realized that it was a simply sumptuous meal that they gave us that day. That was our first experience. We went home and bought chopsticks. We used them at every meal until we weren't phased with them anymore.

I: Sister, will you describe your experiences with language training?

MUEHLENBEIN: At that time there were just two groups of Catholic missionaries that had language schools in Peking and both groups were men. The Protestant language school was very well-known and very well established and anybody was welcome there. But the Catholic missionaries had never gone there and sisters had never gone there. So they got us a teacher that had been trained at this language school. He came an hour a day, five days a week. At the language school (afterwards as I found out), you got two hours from the main teacher plus three or four hours with private teachers. We didn't have that.

This teacher brought two cousins of his, young girls, who simply didn't come across with their teaching at all. We were doing so much for the university like helping with their library and helping with their proof-reading, helping with publications and so on. There was always so much to do after the class that you naturally put the books aside and waited until the next morning. I don't think we were very good students that first year.

I: Did you then extend your training?

MUEHLENBEIN: At the end of the first year the question was whether to start our section for the girls. But there were financial problems and we couldn't, and so they said we could wait for another year.

I: What kind of financial problems?

MUEHLENBEIN: It was a misunderstanding with our community. They thought since the fathers had invited us they were to take on the financing of our school. Our community hadn't learned what having a foreign mission would mean.

I: With the extra year, what did you do?

MUEHLENBEIN: That year, besides studying, we did a lot of going out to see the historical places and things like that. We went to other schools and made very good friends at Yenching University. One of the teachers there was a Quaker from England and she used to like to come into the city and stay overnight with us. She did that very often. The head of the women's section was Mrs. Murray Frame, and she was a wonderful woman. So we got more acclimatized.

The second summer we started planning, and we decided instead of the university classes or the lower middle school classes, we would take the first class of senior middle school. We started with that. The fathers had the complete program: lower middle school up through the six year middle school, and university. We started with girls in senior middle school and then would go on to the college classes. I suppose we felt that having a group of students for three years that they would be a kind of leaven in the first college class that would be taken.

I: You started with girls who were probably about in form four then?

MUEHLENBEIN: About sophomore class in our high school. Here they take two years and four years. There it was three years and three years. It was like a sophomore class in high school.

I: That first year when you were working in the library and proofing the publications, what was the library collection that had been established?

MUEHLENBEIN: They had gotten books from all over the States. They had applied to Catholic organizations, and so on, for books, and books had come in. Those books had to be catalogued and put in order. They wanted the title of university, but the government said first of all that library would have to be catalogued. That had to be done before they got the title of university.

Then they had one of the first printing presses in Peking. They had a linotype. It was the first linotype in Peking. Fu Jen had men from various countries and languages. They had Chinese scholars that had been educated in France and other places, so they were encouraging publication of articles and magazines that these men wrote. It was English and Spanish and French. Sister Donalda was the Spanish and the French teacher. I remember seeing her sit way into the late hours in our living room working at the French and Spanish. Sister Ronayne did most of the English proof-reading. Chinese men who ran the linotype and the men who set the type didn't know these languages. Sometimes you would correct one mistake and they would come back and there would be another one.

I: Can you recall what some of these publications were about and what kinds of books they were particularly interested in printing?

MUEHLENBEIN: They had one magazine that was for the people in the States. That was the history of the university and what was going on. Then they had another magazine, a more classical one, that came out four times a year. It had articles in English and French and Spanish and in Chinese. Then there were other things printed. I don't remember what the other things all were. I know they were very much interested in the caves that had been discovered in western China in Shansi, and some of these archeologists were there at Fu Jen.

They were working with a Hungarian doctor that the Belgian missionaries had brought in because the Belgian missionaries had lost so many men through typhus. They worked up in Mongolia. They brought this doctor in and he worked at the university, making a syrum against typhus and publishing articles.

I: Did you ever have any opportunities to meet with Teilhard de Chardin who was in Peking at the time?

MUEHLENBEIN: He was there and talked at the university. We were there for the talk, but at that time the name didn't mean much to us. I remember the talk on the Peking Man and so on. Afterwards I thought, that was it that night.

I: Besides getting the library organized and catalogued, were there other things that the university had to do before the government would officially recognize it?

MUEHLENBEIN: They had two sections, two colleges, and they had to have a third college. I think they opened a college of education besides the other two. I don't remember what the other two sections were. Three colleges and the library were the two things that the government required. That was only after six years of foundation, so I think they were going pretty well.

I: How did the Chinese respond to you as Catholic sisters?

MUEHLENBEIN: They had been used to Catholic sisters because the Sisters of Charity had been there, I think, from about 1860. The Franciscan Missionaries of Mary were there. Both of these groups were French. As far as our being sisters, that didn't bother them; but the fact that we were Americans, that bothered them. They were used to only French sisters and mostly French priests. "Were there Catholics in America? Were the Americans Catholics, too?" That was the question we most often got.

I: When you went outside of Peking, to areas that were perhaps not quite as cosmopolitan, did you have a different reaction then?

MUEHLENBEIN: Not in China proper because all through China they were used to sisters. It was when we got to Taiwan, where people had never seen sisters, we got the response. There were only five sisters on the whole island and they were in the north. I remember the first time we went out after we got to Taiwan. The Taiwanese girl with us started laughing. I said, "What's the matter?" She said, "That man said, 'Where are the brides going?'" We were dressed in white then!

I: Sister, how does your order differ from other religious orders and how was this illustrated in the kinds of work that was being done by Catholic missionaries in China?

MUEHLENBEIN: The mission orders are founded for the missions, and they are ready for anything. Many of the other orders in the States here, like the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis or the School Sisters of St. Francis, do nothing but a particular line of work. We have always done any kind of work. As I said, we are a family group. In fact, we make a special vow besides the three that others make; that is called the "vow of stability." That means that we are going to stay with the group that we've joined. As I said before, others have a more unified system and members can be moved from one house to another. We can't. We have our missions, of course, but it is all under St. Benedict's. We belong to St. Benedict's and we don't leave it, except when new branches come out from it. Then people volunteer for those branches.

I: What contact, both in Peking and later when you were in Kaifeng, did you have with the different Protestant missionaries that were working in China?

MUEHLENBEIN: From the beginning it was a very, very good contact. Any missionaries we met and worked with, we got along with.

I: When you got to China, were the buildings already established for your school?

MUEHLENBEIN: No, it wasn't. We only had the small compound to live in. The university had their building and they had their property. But for the women's section, no. It was after our second year there that we rented this property. We didn't buy it; we rented it. It belonged to Prince Kun and it was a 20 acre spread. It had been a present by Chien Lung (a Manchu emperor) to his fourth daughter when she married a Mongol prince. Many of the original buildings had disappeared. Old, great big blocks of bricks and buildings and the walls were there. What was still there were very good Chinese buildings and Chinese courtyards. We didn't have to repair them all or get them all into use because we had only one class. The next year and the next year, we did more. When the Holy Ghost Sisters took over when we left, they rented another compound near the university. This one was too expensive for them. I think they bought the other compound.

I: Did the Fu Jen boys come from all over China or were you drawing from one particular area?

MUEHLENBEIN: All over China from north to south. From Hawaii--I think there were four boys there from Hawaii and there was even one from Boston, Massachusetts. These were overseas Chinese--and from other Asian countries, too. The students came through efforts of missionaries in all parts of China.

I: How did the boys from different sectors of China relate?

MUEHLENBEIN: I know there would sometimes be quarrels among the different provinces. I remember one evening we were over at the university when somebody came in and said, "There is a fight between the Fukienese and the Cantonese!" One boy that was with us jumped up. Father said to him, "Now please remember you're a Catholic." "But I'm Cantonese, too!" he said, and off he went. Different provinces had their differences.

I: Was the situation the same for your girls? Did they come from all over China?

MUEHLENBEIN: Yes, all over China. We had some girls from Szechuan; we had one from Fukien. We had them from different sections of China. We didn't have so many, but quite a selection of them.

I: You mentioned earlier that the purpose of the school was to educate the educated class in China.

MUEHLENBEIN: It wasn't to educate the educated class but to work with the educated class.

I: What kinds of backgrounds did most of your girls come from?

MUEHLENBEIN: Some were from political families. The father of two of the girls afterwards was mayor of Peking under the Japanese and had quite a bit of trouble. He took the job because he thought he could prevent a lot of the atrocities. Others were from wealthy families. Others were from ordinary families.

I: Did you have a scholarship program? How was your tuition?

MUEHLENBEIN: We didn't have a scholarship program because we could hardly makes ends meet. The girls paid the tuition which we figured paid for one month of the salaries for the secular teachers. The rest of it, we had to meet. Of course, the sisters were teaching and were not drawing any salaries.

I: Did you receive any kind of personal allowance while you were in China?

MUEHLENBEIN: No, we didn't. After the second year when our community decided it had to take on the financial burden of our work, it was a matter of our writing and stating what we needed and why and the community then sending us what was needed. There was never, in those years, a set amount we could count on, neither personally or for our work.

I: Would you describe the rest of your staffing at the school, your secular teachers? Who were they and what did they teach?

MUEHLENBEIN: The principal of the school was also the principal of the boys' middle school. But we had a woman, Gertrude Chen, who had been educated in the States and who acted as kind of a principal. She was in charge of the girls. The sisters taught the English and I taught the math and the physics. The rest of the teachers were lay teachers; some of them from the boys' middle school, some otherwise. They were very good teachers. The program for the Chinese middle school was much harder than for the American high school. For instance, in math, I had to teach trigonometry and analytical geometry which you didn't teach in those days in our high schools. And physics---this was their second try at physics. They had had physics in the junior middle school. Now this was upper physics, too.

I: Were the sisters the only foreigners who were teaching in the school?

MUEHLENBEIN: Yes, we were the only foreigners.

I: What was the Catholic perspective at this time about having the Chinese in leadership positions as chancellors, principals?

MUEHLENBEIN: They wanted it very much. All the higher officials at the University were Chinese, except the president was American. The president was Dr. Barry O'Toole, an oblate of St. Benedict from Pennsylvania. The chancellor was Chen Yuan, and all the other heads of the departments were Chinese.

I: How many of your students were actually Catholic?

MUEHLENBEIN: Very few. Maybe one-third, that's all.

I: What kind of religious instruction did you offer?

MUEHLENBEIN: We didn't offer any definite religious instruction. We had our mass, our services every morning and the Catholic girls came to that. Surprisingly, many of the other girls would also show up for it. And the same in the evening for the evening prayer. Miss Chen, who acted as the principal, took the Catholic girls for instruction, but we didn't force any instruction on the non-Catholic girls. If they wanted to come, okay. If they didn't, okay, too.

I: Why was it that the principal offered the religious instruction instead of the sisters?

MUEHLENBEIN: Because she was Chinese. Besides the religious instruction, the course also included moral problems and the like. Being Chinese she would know the customs and culture of her people better than we did.

I: How close were you able to get to your staff and students during your time at the middle school there?

MUEHLENBEIN: I think it was very close, especially with the students. The contacts that they kept with us after we left were very close. There are still some of them that I write to. Some are in Taiwan and so we know them still.

I: Were you able to do personal counseling with them? Did they come to you with their problems?

MUEHLENBEIN: Oh yes. Yes, they would.

I: How did you feel your science areas compared with your humanities areas?

MUEHLENBEIN: The history and those subjects were taught by the Chinese, so I don't know. The biology was taught by a Chinese teacher and I taught physics the second year and chemistry the third year. I think they were all very good and very solid.

I: How did you feel you were preparing your students for a modernizing China?

MUEHLENBEIN: I think most of these students afterwards went on--some of them to the States and otherwise for work. I know a few years ago I got a letter from one of the students who had gone to a nursing course and came to Rockefeller Hospital in Peking after she left school. Then she came to the States with her husband and wanted a nursing job. Everything was upset in China and all the records destroyed. She didn't have much, so she wrote to me. I wrote back and explained the program we had had at our school and what she had graduated from and so on and so forth and she got the job.

I: How aware do you think your students were of the problems that were facing China at that time?

MUEHLENBEIN: Oh, I think they knew. They couldn't help but know it. They knew it from their families. With the Japanese encroaching on Manchuria and planes flying over every so often and so on, you just knew something was going to come some day.

End of Side One - Tape One

I: How politically involved were the students?

MUEHLENBEIN: The two girls, as I said, were from political families. They didn't say much about it, but they certainly knew what was going on. They expressed their fears sometimes. The rest I don't think knew too much about it.

I: How do you think your students, at this time, were taught to appreciate and to understand Chinese culture?

MUEHLENBEIN: They had a very, very good Chinese teacher. I don't remember her name, but I do know that she was also teaching at what was considered the best government middle school in the city. Their other Chinese teachers were good, too. They had the regular Chinese courses as the middle schools were insisting on in those days. They were stressing their culture and their language.

I: What if one of your students wanted to become a Catholic sister? What process would she go through?

MUEHLENBEIN: They would have to tell one of us and talk to us about it. We didn't get any girls those first years because it would seem too uncertain. After we went to Kaifeng, then there were some girls that wanted to. We had to apply for them to the States here. Although we didn't quite think they should go to the States for their training, the advice given to the community by the priests and the fathers was that the first few ought to be trained here. And so they were. We have our own novitiate now in Taiwan and they apply there.

I: The first ones did come to the United States. They became Benedictine Sisters?

MUEHLENBEIN: Oh, yes. Sure.

I: You didn't have them go to any other orders for their training?

MUEHLENBEIN: Oh, no. No. Our present ones, too, are being trained by those trained in the States. They're a part of us, although right now we are trying to form what we call independent priories among the missions in Taiwan, Japan, Puerto Rico, and the Bahamas that they will be more or less independent from the States. They choose their own superior, but the things have to be ratified from this end here. We're trying to make them independent.

I: What were the obstacles a Chinese girl or woman faced in becoming a sister? Were there certain difficulties?

MUEHLENBEIN: When the girls would come over here, of course, they had to know their English; otherwise there was a language difficulty. As it was, I think there was a language difficulty. As a sister the question of the family often comes in. The Chinese family objects more strenuously than our American Catholic families. Some of them that joined, their families were not Catholics. It was very hard for them and hard for the family.

I: You mentioned that you had some good contact with Yenching University. What differences did you notice between Yenching and Fu Jen?

MUEHLENBEIN:I think it was about the same. We were all trying to help the Chinese and give them leaders for China.

I: What kind of avocational activities were you able to do while you were in Peking?

MUEHLENBEIN: I don't know that we had much because with our work we were busy. We did go out and see these Chinese famous places. Sisters would come from other parts and often we would trot them to the Temple of Heaven and places like that.

I: When did it financially look like the Benedictines were not going to be able to carry through with their plans?

MUEHLENBEIN: We had only opened up our school one year when the fathers had to give up. We stayed on two more years to finish off the middle school before we gave up. We were supposed to start college courses after the three years, but our community didn't feel they could do that. Besides that the Society of the Divine Word Fathers had their own community of sisters called Sisters of the Holy Ghost. They wanted their own sisters, naturally. So that's why financially; and we wanted to get back to the Benedictine fathers.

I: How did you feel about letting go of your school after you had begun the work here?

MUEHLENBEIN: It was hard. It was very hard, but it was better to go on to Kaifeng than to come back to the States, which we certainly didn't want to do.

I: Why did you not want to return to the U.S.?

MUEHLENBEIN: Once a missionary always a missionary.

I: How did it happen that you went to Kaifeng and what work were you able to establish there?

MUEHLENBEIN: One of the priests from the university that went to Kaifeng was Father Clougherty. As I mentioned before, he came to Kaifeng in 1920 as a young priest. He didn't want to go back to the States. Bishop Tacconi, the head of the vicariate, invited him back and anybody else that wanted to come. So three of them went. Two years later when we were to leave Peking, Bishop Tacconi gave us the same invitation.

Kaifeng was the center of Honan Province, the capital. Bishop Tacconi had come 40 years before. 25 years before he had been made vicar. I call him bishop, but he really was a vicar of the whole of Honan Province. His philosophy was: missionaries have to work themselves out of a job. They must

prepare the natives to take over their work. That was his philosophy. (I think all vicars, all missionaries, all religious orders were working toward that goal.) By the time we got down there in Kaifeng, Honan had been divided into nine vicariates. At least three of those vicariates were in complete control of Chinese--Chinese bishops and Chinese priests. Kaifeng was the main vicariate.

Every village and market town, I think, in the whole of Honan had a chapel or a church. The priests were stationed in the market towns and went out to the others. There were the Italian priests (that was our group); there were Spanish priests; there was a group of Germans and I think three vicariates of Chinese. It was a mixed group. They had one seminary in Kaifeng for the nine vicariates. Bishop Tacconi had his own minor seminary where he had taken these country boys and trained them from the bottom up. If they didn't continue to the major seminary, at least they were educated. His cathedral was a nice, solid building, and so was the center, their house.

The Sisters of Providence from St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana, were there. They had been there since 1920 and had a middle school. There was a boys' middle school that the bishops ran. There were a lot of other activities, but there was no dispensary. When we went down there, we didn't know exactly what we were going to do. We didn't feel we dare start a middle school because the Sisters of Providence had theirs already and that was enough. So looking around we decided that what was needed, especially in a corner of the city where the bishop had put us, was a dispensary. It was a poor section. There was no mission activity at all between the Little South Gate, and the East Gate. We asked for nurses and we got a nurse. Sister Ronayne and I went to teach at the Provincial University--the Honan Provincial University. I taught English. Father Clougherty was there already at the university when we got there. A music teacher came and so she had music classes and helped with the music at church and things of that kind.

The big work that we had until the war came was this dispensary with the rest of us doing other things. The people were a wonderful group of people, but they were not the same as the class we had been dealing with before. They were ordinary country people. Honanese isn't too bad a dialect compared to Mandarin, but it is, after all, a dialect. We had a little problem there at first getting into the language.

I: Can you describe in greater detail the difference between the people that you were working with in Kaifeng and in Peking?

MUEHLENBEIN: As I said, in Peking we were working with the educated class. In Kaifeng these people had had very little education--those that we were working with. And the children--there were oh, so many children in our area. They were not going to school at all because they were just too poor to go to the public school where they had to have a uniform. We finally built our own home and moved out of the compound; we turned that into a poor school. In a couple of days we had over 100 children swarming around--children who had never gone to school at all.

I: The Lutherans were very active in Honan Province. Did you have any contact with the Lutheran work?

MUEHLENBEIN: Yes, there were some Lutherans in Honan. The biggest Protestant mission in Kaifeng was the China Inland Mission. Around the corner from us were some Methodist women. Especially when the Japanese war was moving in on us, we formed the International Relief Committee of all the missionaries.

I: And what did that committee do?

MUEHLENBEIN: Nanking fell in November of 1937. We called it the "Rape of Nanking!" It was terrible what went on there when the Japanese took over. The missionaries in Nanking felt that if the missionaries in other parts knew what happened in Nanking, they could do something about it.

It was in December that some Chinese got into Kaifeng. They had come through the Japanese lines with letters sewn into their Chinese shoes. Those letters told all about what had gone on in Nanking. Then the missionaries got together and formed a committee. Father Clougherty was chosen the chairman of the committee, and they started planning for when Kaifeng would be taken by the Japanese. They studied all the different mission compounds and decided which ones could be used for refugee centers and how many people could be put into each. They wrote letters to the Red Cross and other organizations asking for funds and they got the funds.

They prepared those great big Chinese kwos for cooking water, cooking rice and millet in the mission compounds; they stored rice, millet, oil, wood and whatever they felt would be needed. In that way we were getting ready for the day when Kaifeng would fall. Before Kaifeng fell, every woman knew which refugee camp she was to go to with her children and what she was to bring with her when she came.

But before Kaifeng fell, the relief committee found work that it hadn't planned on. From November until April-May, the Chinese fought around Hsuchow, and the Japanese advance was stopped. One evening in the beginning of April, some members of the China Inland Mission were at the railroad station seeing off friends when a train pulled in with wounded soldiers. The Chinese doctors were working desperately to help these wounded. One of the China Inland Mission men went

up and asked if they would like some help. Oh, they would be so happy for help. They went back to the hospital and gathered doctors and nurses and supplies and went back to help with these wounded.

The next day the committee was told of this and medical groups were formed, each group under a medical personnel. And a man was kept at the railroad station. Before a train of wounded reached the station, he would call certain places. By the time the train actually pulled in the missionaries were there with their medical kits and so on to help. These men were lying on the floors of box cars, the metal box cars with nothing under them. Some of them didn't have any other clothing at all. Some of them had had nothing to eat for 24 hours. The committee got straw and put it on the floors. They got kettles to boil water and make a congee of millet or rice. The Red Cross brought clothing. Every train load that came in, these other supplies were given to them also, besides taking care of the wounded. Sometimes there were some dead on the train, and the committee buried them.

Soon we realized that some of these men would not reach Hankow, which would maybe have taken 48 hours. The committee convinced the Chinese Red Cross to open a place in Kaifeng where these men could get off the train and be taken care of. Many of them lived that otherwise would have died. So the committee was really very helpful before Kaifeng fell.

Finally, we were told not to go to the station. We had been going at night because of the bombing during the daytime. The station had been reduced to rubble. Instead, we would go to a middle school right inside the little South Gate, only two blocks from our home. There we would go every morning and work with the wounded. These wounded had come right in from the battle field. Some had walked in; some

had been brought in by farmers. They had had no first aid that those in the box cars had had. On Saturday morning during the first part of June, we were told not to go because the wounded wouldn't be brought into Kaifeng any more. The Japanese were too close.

All day Sunday there was shelling. Saturday the city was a dead city. There were people leaving through the West Gate. Sunday all day they were shelling. The China Inland Mission had left one doctor inside the city because the gates would be closed and nobody could get to the hospital. Sunday evening, three people only a block north of our compound were wounded when the shell exploded. They were brought in and so we got Dr. Reese. He took care of the man and the woman who were wounded, but there was a young boy--his intestines were hanging out; they were broken in several places. The doctor was an old China hand and he knew how the Chinese felt about such things. He said to us, "It's no use, but I have to sew him up." While one of us was holding a lantern and others handing him supplies, he fixed up the boy, but the boy died before morning. Father Clougherty baptized him before he died.

That was the first Dr. Reese knew that the city was being shelled. He was very, very deaf. Coming through the streets to our place, he realized the shelling. The next morning he left his compound early, intending to come up to our place and have Father Clougherty go with him up on the city wall with white flags to stop the shelling. Instead, on the street he met the marching Japanese who were coming into the city. The first news we had when he reached our place was that the Japanese were in the city. It was Monday morning.

I: What was the date?

MUEHLENBEIN: The Chinese retreated from the city, leaving only a few men on the walls to continue shelling at the advancing Japanese to cover the retreat. This was Saturday, June 4, 1938. The next day all had retreated and the Japanese shelled the city. It was Monday, June 6th, they entered the city.

I: What happened to you once the Japanese took over the city?

MUEHLENBEIN: We were on the road between the North Gate and the Little South Gate. The Japanese coming in the North Gate passed right by our place going out the Little South Gate. The other Japanese group came in the East Gate, went over until they hit the main street of the city and then went out the Big South Gate. From that morning until 7:30 that night, we stood in our gate and watched this marching of the Japanese coming right straight through the city.

They were determined not to stop like they had stopped at Nanking; they were determined to keep right on to Chengchow--big railroad center. We stood there watching the army coming: everything from men on foot to horses drawing carts of ammunition. Finally the last thing in the evening, carts and carts of pontoon boots passed because the Japanese would have to cross the Yellow River. The Japanese recognized us as Americans and they were very friendly. Officers would drop out of the line and talk to us.

The Chinese were out filling the streets, watching all this procession. That night when the army reached about half way between Kaifeng and Chengchow, the Chinese opened the dikes to the Yellow River. The whole, complete Japanese army was destroyed. Of course, the Yellow River has changed course many times in the centuries. Now instead of going north of Kaifeng, it started a new bed, circling the city to the south. Near the city the river had three dikes. Otherwise it had just one. The city itself had its own dike around the city.

One night we woke: carts rumbling, carts rumbling, carts rumbling. The next morning we heard that the water was lapping against the dike that surrounded the city. The Japanese had rounded up all the men and the bags and were rushing them out to put sandbags on top of the dike. If the dike had broken or if the water had gotten higher than they could keep up with it, the next thing to save the city would be the city walls which were huge. Every gate of the city was closed and sandbagged, except one section of the Big South Gate. The sandbags were ready to close that gate to try to keep the water from coming into the city. The fathers would bike out everyday and come back to tell us where the water was and how it was lapping at the sandbags. Finally the river had made a new bed for itself and the water went down. The Chinese and Japanese worked together to save the city and that was for the good also.

But there was another problem now. I didn't tell you what happened to the refugees. When the Japanese came in, every refugee camp had two or three times the number of people that they were prepared for. The women and children streamed in. Besides that the country people came in. These refugee camps had to take not only the women and children, but also men that were with them. The Benedictines--Father Ildephonse, Sister Ronayne and Sister Annelda--were in charge of the refugee camp near the West Gate.

The day before the Japanese came in, six men came to the gate begging to be taken in--wounded soldiers. That might have spoiled everything for the refugee camp, but sister took them in. The next day she sent to Dr. Reese and asked him to come. His answer was, "I am the only foreigner in our camp and we have 2000 people here. I don't dare leave this camp." Sister Annelda is one of these people who is always ready to do something.

She had some stretchers made and got these men that had come in from the countryside as bearers. She took an American flag. Marching at the head of the procession, she marched these stretchers through the Japanese lines into the CIM compound. The next day Dr. Reese succeeded in getting them out through the gates to the hospital; the Japanese did nothing about it.

The Japanese seemed to be glad for these camps. Every camp had a sign on its gate saying that it was a camp for women and children. The Japanese, the next day, appeared with signs of their own to put on the gates threatening the soldiers with punishment if any of them violated those camps. In fact, sometimes those Japanese soldiers would come with women and children that they had found in their homes and say, "I think you better take them in here." I don't have the statistics now about how many people these refugee camps took care of and how many they fed, but they stayed open for three months. Although the women and children from the town could go back to their homes after the Japanese settled down, the people from the countryside had no place to go and it took time to get them settled.

These camps, then, were running all right, but there was another problem. That was the refguees from the flood. They were crowding into the market towns and were destitute. They had lost everything. The committee went into action again and wrote letters for funds and food and clothing and bedding. Winter was coming and they distributed these to the refugees in the various places where they were. That work kept on until the Japanese took Pearl Harbor. That was the kind of work that the committee took care of. The committee really didn't disperse until the missionaries were dispersed.

I: Sister, how did the Chinese farmers and villagers who were pretty much wiped out by the breaching of the dikes respond to this action of the Kuomintang army?

MUEHLENBEIN: I don't know how they responded to that, but I should think they realized it was something to stop the Japanese. The Japanese had thought they would be in Chengchow in a couple of days, but it took four years for them to get there. That really held up the Japanese. Chengchow was the center of the railroad lines going west of Hsuchow to Sian and coming from the north from Peking down to Hankow. It was an important junction, so it really held them up.

I: Until Pearl Harbor, what was the attitude of missionaries about staying? Were most of them committed to staying or were they leaving?

MUEHLENBEIN: You mean the Catholic missionaries?

I: Both the Catholic and the Protestant.

MUEHLENBEIN: There were still some Protestants around on Pearl Harbor Day, but many of them had pulled out.

I: What was your Catholic policy about leaving or staying when situations became complicated like this?

MUEHLENBEIN: The point was, we had our apostolic delegate in Peking. He would tell us if we should or shouldn't go.

I: And what kinds of messages was he sending you at this time?

MUEHLENBEIN: On Pearl Harbor Day the Japanese took 22 Catholic missionaries (four priests and 18 sisters) and four women (two Baptists and two Methodists) into a place--well, it was a home for five people. The fathers wouldn't move into the house with us because they said they weren't supposed to be in a building with so many women. They finally opened a schoolroom for them. The Japanese had sealed everything with his

majesty's seal. We were there 18 days--until the day after Christmas. Then we were allowed to go back to our own compound. But by January 1st we had to be re-interned. By this time the arrangements were made that it would be in our compound. The 10 Providence Sisters and the four fathers moved into our compound. There we stayed until we were taken to Weihsien.

I: Will you describe in greater detail, Sister, your situation when you were in the first home? How much mobility did you have? What supplies did you have? How did you spend your time?

MUEHLENBEIN: The day that we were supposed to go into this compound was the eighth of December. Our carpenter who had built our house, a Catholic, appeared in the compound early in the morning and the Japanese could not make him leave. We refused to go because the vicar had sent us a notice that we were not to go until they let us know. We were fooling around, fooling around, fooling around. In the afternoon Brother Francisco and Father Bregala and two Italian sisters came. They were going to try to hold our property so that the Japanese wouldn't take it.

Then we were told to take nothing but a wash basin and chopsticks. We finally convinced the Japanese that that house had no furniture. We knew it didn't because the Baptist family had moved all their furniture into our house. They had asked us if they could. They said, "If America goes to war with the Japanese, you lose your things and we lose ours, too." We convinced them there was no furniture. They said we could take our bedding and beds and clothing. Then we got the carts and Chin, the carpenter, loaded up everything for us. The Japanese couldn't move him. He went with us.

It was a couple of blocks down the street and around the corner. When we got there, Chin set up the beds for us. He said, "What else?" And Sister Francetta said, "Stoves." This was December. Chin said, "From where?" And she said, "Anywhere." He went back to our place and hauled over stoves and he hauled coal. By that time, Mr. Liu, a Baptist who had been a head mason for our building, came along. The two men set up the stoves and started fires for us; they drew water from the well in the yard and so on.

In the midst of this in walks a 16 year old boy who had charge of our cow at another end of the city. He used to milk the cow and bring the milk twice a day. The Japanese had not stopped that kid at the gate. He refused to stop and he refused to hand the milk over to them. He was here with the milk. He did that the whole 18 days we were there. The Sisters of Providence had a wonderful woman for a cook. And nothing was going to stop her either! That noon (the Japanese were there before dinner) the cook appeared with their meal. The Japanese could not stop her; they could not take the meal from her. She marched right in and gave the dinner to the sisters. She did that every meal for the 18 days they were there. We had taken some bread and other food stuffs along, and we had the milk that the boy brought. The fathers had no supply of food.

I had looked around that evening and I found that what was supposed to be the kitchen of the house was piled high with leaves and twigs and so was the laundry shed outside. Evidently the Chinese teachers had gathered them to use as fuel. The next morning I got one of the other sisters and we were going to clean out the kitchen. We got in and the kitchen was already cleaned out. We went out in the yard and the laundry shed was cleaned out. There was a Chinese man who told us he was the cook for the Baptist women. They had refused to go with the Japanese unless this man could go

with them. He spent the 18 days there with us, sleeping outside their room. Nobody could go into their room at night. That's the way our Christians were--Protestants and Catholics.

That noon the Italian sisters brought us a dinner. The Japanese made no attempt to feed us even after they told us to take nothing along. A Baptist woman came to Sister Francetta and said, "I see you have pots and pans and I have a cook. Let's get together on it." And so we did. For the 18 days we were there, these four women and the eight of us and the fathers ate together. We had nobody to go and buy the food. First a brother tried to do it, but that was kind of hard. The fathers asked if their cook could come in. Then they discovered what their cook had done. He had refused to leave their compound. The Japanese could not force him until the Italian fathers could make arrangements with the Japanese to move the fathers' furniture to their compound. So Wang came in smiling. He was the only one who could go in and out for those 18 days.

It was Christmas time coming. We couldn't write notes because the Italian sisters couldn't read our notes. At the school the Chinese Sisters of Providence were there, so everything was mouth message: "Tell sister this and that thing is in such and such a place and come back with it." Things came, including Sister Ursuline's violin and song books and music and everything under the sun. So we got ready for Christmas.

We had our masses during Christmas Eve night. Christmas morning the dining room was lively and all decorated, even with balloons flying around. We were having breakfast and singing, everybody together, when two high class Japanese officers walked in. We had never seen them before. They

greeted us with, "Merry Christmas," and said, "We've had word from Tokyo to release you. You can go home." We said, "When?" And they said, "Right now." And we said, "No. We're ready for Christmas and we're spending it together." The next morning the Christians came in--they pushed the Japanese guards aside--and grabbed our stuff. In a little while we were back home.

But that didn't last very long. By the first of January they made us all go back, but this time we were interned in our compound. I don't know what had happened to the Methodist women, but the two Baptist women were outside the city in their compound. The Gripsholm was sent to repatriate people. The Japanese came and told us to go back to the States. From Peking came the message, "Stay."

I: Why did the apostolic delegate think that it was worthwhile for you to remain in China?

MUEHLENBEIN: I don't think it was up to him entirely. I think the final decisions were made in Rome. If anyone really wanted to leave, I am sure they would have been free to go. We just thought those higher up knew the score.

When the two Baptists realized we were not going, they wanted to see us once more. In they marched one day with two Japanese guards. We had a nice visit. They told us that they had said to the Japanese, "Why do we have to go when the sisters don't have to go?" The Japanese said, "Because they have a 'chang kuei ti' in Rome." "Chang kuei ti" means the "keeper of the shop" or something like that. A wife calls her husband, "chang kuei ti."

It must have been February or March in 1943 when the Japanese came and told us that we would have to leave and go to this camp in Weihsien. All over North China they released the news the same day. They had printed slips for

all of us telling us what to take along and what not to and so on. We were supposed to leave on the 21st of March. Two days before, they came to examine our baggage. The first trunk--everything had to come out of the trunk. Then it had to be repacked. We were horrified. Every picture had to be identified--"That's my father or that's my grandfather", or something like that. They had told us to take only religious books, so it was this argument: "Was that book a religious book?" No maps. Well, the Bible had maps of the Holy Land, so out came all the maps. They started in on one trunk after the other down the hall. We had repacked the trunk of medical things from our dispensary. We were horrified the way they went through these trunks. We didn't want that trunk upset like that. Imagine!

Finally we had to give them dinner. While they were eating dinner, two of us sneaked out and pushed the medical trunk in the ones that were already marked. They never caught on; they never opened the trunk. They came back after dinner and started the rest of the trunks. At the end we had one trunk where we had dropped in odds and ends of things. It wasn't very full. The Japanese looked at that and then walked off. The sister with me, one of the Providence Sisters, said, "Books!" We dashed upstairs to the library and we grabbed as many books as we could carry down and put them in and closed the trunk. So we got that past them. That was on Friday.

On Sunday morning we left early for the railroad station. When we got there, we found out we were going to have one car. In the car already were 11 priests from Hsin Hsiang--Society of the Divine Word priests. And we were 22. That was 33 people. Men just don't think of things. They don't think of food. We got going on this trip and discovered that we had our food and the Sisters of Providence had their food. We had supplied food for the Benedictine fathers, but these SVD priests didn't have a bite of food among them.

The Sisters of Providence and we shared our food with them. At Hsuchow we switched our car to the line north.

The next morning we were in Tsinan and they allowed us out on the railroad platform. There were two consular police, not the military police, but the consular police with us. One of the SVD Fathers went up and asked if we could go to a restaurant. Tsinan had been German for a while and the restaurant was under German auspices. At first he said no. Then he said we could go in groups of so many. So we went and had our breakfast. I'll tell you, that it was a good thing we did have it. We were switched to this line going east and we landed in Weihsien about 2:30 in the afternoon. They had buses that took us out to the Presbyterian compound that they had taken over.

We had to get off at the gate and march in and line up on the playground. They checked us and the consular police handed his papers over to the other man. Then he came and shook hands with us and said goodbye. We didn't know what was going to happen. The missionaries from Shantung Province were waiting there. I don't know how many of them there were. Two groups from Tsinan; two groups from Chowtsun; another group from Tsingtaen. They had the kitchen going already. That first night was kind of horrible. Our bedding wasn't there or anything yet.

The Japanese had prepared these buildings by taking everything out of the buildings and throwing it out in the yard --from first floor, second floor. There wasn't a thing in the buildings. In the hospital they had ripped out all the plumbing, fixtures and everything. The sisters were given one of the classroom buildings with a group of unmarried women. The next classroom building was all unmarried women and young girls. The families had the houses that had been for the students. They were little Chinese rooms and a family of three would get one. A family of more than three would get two. You couldn't get two single beds in, so everybody was looking for double beds. You could get a double bed in and just about crawl in.

Day after day the internees came in. One night--that's the night I remember the best--150 stalwart Belgians marched in and with them 32 Belgian sisters. That was three complete vicariates north of the Great Wall. Other groups from the west came and so on. Finally the civilians started coming. These were business people, bankers and so on; they were engineers from the mines and from the railroad. They were Belgian; they were Dutch and they were English and with their families. That was pitiful to see them coming in.

We marched in with our suitcases and that was it. But these people, a child in the arms and a child hanging on them, lugging their suitcases. We couldn't go and help them until after they checked in. Then we could go and help. I know one man was supported between two other men. He had spent the time, several months, in the Tientsin prison because he was a banker. The Japanese thought he had wired the bank to be blown up.

In the end we were almost 2,000 people. We were divided into three groups for the kitchen. Each group had to appoint someone to be their liaison; Father Clougherty was for our group. These liaisons formed a committee that had to run the camp. They had to be the go-betweens between the internees and the Japanese. They were getting it from both sides. And there was no hospital. There was no medical provision. And one of our groups were the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis from Springfield, Illinois. Their superior said one day, "I'm going to clean up that hospital if I have to do it myself."

The kitchens were in charge of the internees; so was the baker. In fact, the priest who was put in charge of the bakery had been a baker in Canada before he entered the community. He couldn't make those ovens work, so he and a group of men took those ovens apart and rebuilt them. They baked the bread then for us. But the only trouble was that the flour had a lot of sand in it, as was sometimes found in things we bought in China. (An Englishman in Kaifeng bought some brown sugar for us. Later he told his wife. She said, "You didn't buy that sugar for the sisters, did you?" "Why yes," he said. We had baked a cake with it and sent some to Father Clougherty. He wrote back and said, "If my enemies sand-bagged me, I would understand it. But when my friends do...". When you got brown sugar, you would melt it, then skim off the pieces of wood and things, then you would evaporate it and take only those crystals before using. But the wife hadn't told us that!) Anyhow, this flour had sand in it.

The kitchen staff did wonderful things with what they got from the Japanese, but they didn't get enough. Everything had to go into one kettle--that was for sure. Then we would line up and whatever kind of a bucket we would have, "How many?" "Five people." "Then five scoops." That's the way it went. The fathers had to carry all the coal, make the coal balls and stoke the fires. You would find them on top of the big stoves and stirring big kettles.

The cesspools were all open and those had to be cleaned out. Oh, the men worked so hard. The engineers got busy and picked up the scraps of stuff the Japanese had thrown out of the building and fixed up a heating system for each kitchen, so we would have boiled water. The wells were only surface wells and you know what would happen. Every woman in the camp, even women with small children, had to put in their work cleaning vegetables. A couple of the sisters were given charge of the small children to take them out to the playground so their mothers could help with the work. There was a school organized.

All this to keep the camp going. Then there was a question of classes. The Belgian fathers started by asking for English classes. The committee started formulating classes in English, in other languages, in art. Anything at all that a group would ask for. Always there were teachers in the camp--very good teachers, too. One of the priests in the camp was a Belgian priest who had written a Chinese grammar. The Chinese people used to tell us, "We have no grammar. This priest taught the grammar in the camp and one of the Protestant missionaries said, "No Chinese is ever going to tell me again that their language has no grammar." Another Protestant minister taught a class in Chinese, newspaper Chinese. We had a lot of classes.

Then the Belgian fathers were given the hospital to live in. The first Sunday night they gathered outside the hospital and started singing. People started flocking from all directions because the Belgians just raised the sky when they started singing. The next Sunday they hadn't even appeared when the people were there waiting for the singing. They did that every Sunday night as long as they stayed in the camp.

Then the committee started organizing other entertainment: there was an orchestra; there was vocal singing; there was ballet dancing. One of the big things was the oratorio "Elijah", the oratorio with 100 singers. Mr. Grimes, one of the internees, taught that. Sister Ursuline, our musician, did much of the orchestrating because people had not brought music to the camp. With piano scores she would do the orchestration for the other instruments. We had something like that every other week about until we left.

I: You started to make a comment on the hospital. What health care were you provided with?

MUEHLENBEIN: That sister said she was going to clean up the hospital. The committee then reorganized the living quarters so as to move the Belgian fathers out of the first floor of the hospital. The thing was cleaned up and set up. The head doctor from the Rockefeller Hospital in Peking was there; he took charge of the hospital. There were nurses from the Rockefeller Hospital and so the hospital was set up. People who had brought medical supplies donated them and everybody signed up--I think it was for seven dollars. The money was sent to the Swiss consul in Peking and he was told to buy medical supplies for us. The hospital did really a wonderful job. Everybody connected with it did. As the time went on, of course, it was needed. We only stayed there until August. Those other people had to stay there two more years after that and they were really in pitiable condition.

In the beginning of August of 1943, Father Schnusenberg came to camp. Father Schnusenberg was German. He was the Provincial for the Franciscans; he was the liaison between the Japanese and the apostolic delegate. When he came to camp, we knew there was something going on. His message was that the Pope had finally convinced the Japanese to move the priests and sisters out of this camp to Peking and intern them in religious houses there. We were 400 priests and brothers and 160 sisters; that is to say, we had almost 600 personnel.

The first group was to leave on August 15. We were assigned to the second group and were to leave August 22. The first group left on August 15 about 10:00 in the morning to get to the railroad station. We all wondered what the trip would be like and we were all waiting. We were told not to

take any food; the Catholic missions along the route would supply it. The first Catholic mission was Chou Tsun and their fathers were on the train. An Irish father was left behind because he wasn't American, but the American fathers were on the train and the sisters.

I: Why was he left behind because he was not an American?

MUEHLENBEIN: The Japanese did not intern the Irish nor the Germans nor the Italians. Only those with whom Japan was at war.

They had food and water at the station, but the Japanese would not let them deliver it. In the evening they got to Tsinan where they had to switch to the other line. Again the Catholic mission was waiting. They wouldn't let them have food or water. So they had nothing, not even a drink. The next morning they pulled into Tientsin. The Belgian procuration had had many buns and sausage and coffee waiting. By that time the Japanese gave in and let them have it. But they wouldn't allow any foreigner near the train. The Chinese brought it and handed it to them through the windows. That afternoon when they reached Peking, about 2:00, they were marched from the station through Chien Min gate and into the American embassy compound. Word came back that there the Japanese served lemonade. I said, "Japanese nothing. The French hospital is straight across the road from there. I know those French sisters and that was them."

For the next week we were each given a two quart bottle--saki bottle--and were told to have it full of water, boiled water, and to keep it with us. At Chou Tsun this time, they let them bring the water in. And Tsinan also. The next morning we got the food in Tientsin. But the women in the camp, they had sacrificed their hoarded things and had made sandwiches for us. But with no refrigeration in August in North China--they made the filling the night before. They got

up early that morning and made the sandwiches. By the time we ate them toward evening you can imagine what they were.

All night long, it was go, go, go. Many of the fathers were lying in the aisle because there was no seating room and we were stepping over them. We were a sick group when we reached Peking. Anyhow we marched into this American compound. The first thing I saw was this white coronet of the Sisters of Charity. From the size of the sister I knew it was the Irish Sister Patricia. I raced over to her and fell into her arms. Along comes her head man from the hospital with lemonade. So the lemonade was from them.

From there we had to wait until the buses took us to our places. We were 48 Americans and 32 Belgians who were to go to the Convent of Christ the King. These were Spanish sisters. These sisters had come to Peking shortly before the Japanese war started. The apostolic delegate had asked them what they had come to Peking for. They had come from Anhwei Province and they wanted to get a place and open a language school for their sisters. The delegate said, "I give you a command. A language school not only for your sisters but for any sisters who want to study." So they did.

They bought a place and changed these Chinese buildings--a beautiful place it was, really--into individual rooms and put doors in so that each room would lead into the court. They had room for 40 sisters whom they thought they could house as language students. They had a big dining room. They had a library; they had classrooms and they were ready to take these sisters when the war started. Instead they opened a middle school.

Two years later in August, the apostolic delegate said, "Take 80 sisters." And they said, "We only have sleeping rooms for 40." 80 of us were thrust in on them like that.

When the Japanese finally said we could go to Peking, they insisted that they were not going to feed us as they had at the camp. But Father Schnusenberg haggled with them. Finally they promised to sell each internee (over 500 of them) a half a bag of flour, I think it was 10 pounds of rice or more, and sugar every month. They kept their promise until way to the end of the war. Every month our flour, our rice, our sugar came. When we came up from Weihsien, we were all so hungry that we rang that bell for the dining room five times a day until we got fed up a little bit. For example, at the beginning of the war I weighed 152 pounds. By the time I went up to Peking I weighed 112. That's as hungry as we all were.

Father Schnusenberg had made arrangements with the bakery to hand the flour over to them and they would bake so many loaves of bread. We decided that was wasting flour. Then the Belgian fathers who were interned offered to bake the bread for the Belgian sisters, if the Belgian sisters would take care of their clothes. Then the Franciscans House, where most of the American fathers were, said they would bake the bread for the American sisters. So we got our own flour and didn't bring it to the bakery. Also that broke up the dining room.

With the Belgian sisters having their own bread and we our own bread, we began cooking for ourselves. Each group had a tiny stove with coal balls. Of course, we were two communities in our court. So two corners of the court were taken up with these little stoves cooking for ourselves. We made our own coal balls--we had the court spread with these coal balls drying. They had a laundry and each community had a day for laundry. Two days a week our court would be strung with laundry in the hot summer time.

We also had classes again and Chinese teachers came in. Sister Ursuline organized the music. The apostolic delegate just loved the singing and the playing. He would notify Mother Mary that he was coming at such and such a time and would say, "I hope there is music." The chapel was a beautiful chapel. We used that together for most services, but then each community had their time for their special prayers in the chapel.

Once a week at first, the Japanese would come in. We would have to line up and they would check us. If anybody was sick, the superior had to take a man in to see that the sister was there. If we had to go to the hospital or the dentist, they would give us permits. Pretty soon we were running where we weren't supposed to be running around. Poor Father Schnusenberg was up in arms and Mother Mary was excited because they were responsible for us. And we were going to all kinds of places.

One day one of the Dutch fathers came in to see the sister who had been his English teacher in camp. He said to her, "Are the sisters sick? All the fathers have worms. We're all sick." Then we caught on and went and had tests. Sure enough almost everybody had ascaris; some had amoeba and one of the sisters even had liver fluke. So I tell you, it was going to the French hospital. I even spent some time in the French hospital. They didn't do much for me, so I went to the German hospital because the doctor there was famous for amoebic dysentery. So we got ourselves back in health again. Two years later I was back to 140 pounds. We spent two years like that at this camp.

Then it was August 12 or so; the American sisters were having a retreat. The priest was a Franciscan, Father Plummer, and he had been a Marine before he joined the Franciscans. He was giving lectures and just started when whoom, whoom, a

plane came over. We all looked at Father Plummer. He said afterward he was watching us. If one of us had moved to go, he would have gone, too. But nobody did so he kept on. When we came out, Mother Mary--she was Spanish and very excitable--was jumping up and down with her hands full of papers. She said, "For you, for you, for you." They were slips--one side Japanese and the other side English. The English side was signed by General Wedemeyer. They told us the war was over, that they knew where we were, that we should please stay where we were because otherwise they wouldn't find us and that help was coming.

The next day one of the fathers came rushing in, excited, and said, "There are five American officers in town. They are coming out to see you tomorrow." They came Sunday afternoon. Of course, we told the Belgian sisters, and they wanted to be there, too. So we were all there. One of the first questions we asked them was, "Did you drop those handbills?" They said, "Yes, we dropped them and then we went out to the airfield and dropped ourselves." All over China, where there were concentration camps and prisoner of war camps, they had done this. Planes left Sian in such a way that they reached each of these places at the same time. Like our place, they dropped the bills and they dropped themselves. At the Weihsien camp they dropped right outside the camp. They said the people just simply pushed the Japanese aside and ran out and overwhelmed these men.

For our group the major was in charge; there was a captain who was a doctor; there was a radio technician and there were two others. They had sent out newspapers the day before to us and we decided we didn't know English anymore. One of the sisters piped up and said, "What's a G.I.?" I can still hear those men laughing!

By Monday they had sent notice to Sian that everything was okay. A plane came in on Monday with a colonel and some radio equipment and so on. The first planes in took the sick back, especially from the prisoner of war camps. Some of Doolittle's men--you know Doolittle's raid on Tokyo when their boat went away and they had to find their way to China? Well, some of those men were in a prisoner of war camp there and they were in a pitiable condition.

About Wednesday or Thursday of that week (we would always run to the back gate of the compound and watch after a plane landed to watch the jeeps come in) an arm shot out of one jeep and waved to us. A couple of hours later one of the SVD fathers came and said, "Bishop Megan is in town." (Bishop Megan was their bishop and he had escaped--he and one of the priests had escaped from the Japanese the day of Pearl Harbor.) His men were in camp with us. The father said, "He is taking us back to Sian tomorrow." Sister Marie Gratia of the Providence Sisters went down to see the colonel. He said, "Any of your sisters that want to come along, there is room for them." She sent two of her sisters along. There was no use of our going because the Japanese had our house in Kaifeng and we would have no place to go to and who knew what was happening in Kaifeng.

About two weeks later Sister Marie Gratia went down to see the colonel about something and he said again that there was room in the plane tommorrow for any missionaries that wanted to go back to the interior. The condition was that when they reach Sian they couldn't expect the army to take care of them. She came back and told three more of her sisters to go. We looked at this and talked among ourselves. I went to Sister Francetta and said, "Don't you think one of us should go along to Kaifeng tomorrow? The Italians don't have any face

with the Chinese to get our property back." "Well, yes," she said, "But who?" I said, "I'll go."

They hurriedly packed me that night--winter clothes and everything--and the next morning the three Providence sisters and I went off with the plane. We were down at the hotel waiting for the bus to take us out to the airfield when zoom, zoom, zoom--planes came over, planes came over. The colonel came out, looked up and he said, "The Navy is here. They are Navy planes." The Chinese were on the streets clapping and yelling. Everybody was excited because--I don't know what they called them, but they were small planes. But the Navy told the colonel that the ships were in and he could send people out by ship.

We flew off in this C-47 with bucket seats, and our baggage in the middle, to Sian. When we got off the plane at Sian, here was Father Henkels, an SVD father who had escaped the Japanese, and Father Heur, an SVD father who before had told us Bishop Megan was taking him home. Both of them there in uniform. They took us into the Catholic mission and here were the two sisters who had gone two weeks before. "Sister, where's Bishop Megan?" "Oh," she said, "he loaded his men on oxcarts and they started overland to Hsin Hsiang." Overland in China--the mountain trails with bandits lurking around! We sat tight.

A couple of mornings later we were having a good American breakfast because the men had brought us bacon, butter, and jam. We were eating when one of the sisters said, "I don't think those two fathers over there staying with the Italians are getting much breakfast." These two SVD fathers were staying there. Sister Margaretta, who had gone the first trip, and I took breakfast over. We got into the courtyard and we could hear Bishop Megan's voice. He said, "Come in." We came in and he looked at us. He saw Sister Margaretta and he

knew she was there because he had brought her down. The minute he saw me he said, "How many are you now?" We said, "Six." "The roads are open. You can get carts and start overland." We went out and she said, "I'd rather go back to Peking." And I said I would, too. We went over and told the other sisters. Sister St. Francis, who was in charge of her group, was excited and said, "I'm going out to that airfield and ask those boys to take us to Kaifeng." She said, "Come with me," to one of the sisters. They headed out the front gate and they were just waiting to get into their ricksha when common sense prevailed. Sister St. Francis decided she better not; she would get Bishop Megan mad. So they came back in.

The previous day we had met the doctor from the Rockefeller Hospital, who had been in the Weihsien camp on the street of Sian. He came to see us. We were sitting there talking to him and Bishop Megan came in. It was raining and he had a big poncho on. He threw some papers on the table and he said, "Here, sign these. You're leaving by air tomorrow morning." We signed the papers. The next morning came a weapons carrier and got our stuff. The man said, "There are 15 cases of food on the plane. Be sure that's taken off at Kaifeng." The plane was going from Kaifeng to Hsuchow and from Hsuchow to Shanghai. At Hsuchow it was going to pick up a sick Chinese general and take him to Shanghai. The men would barely set down in Kaifeng and go again.

When we got to Kaifeng, the Chinese were in charge of this field, but the Japanese were still running it. These Japanese unloaded the plane and refueled it for the Americans and so on. Father Henkels came with us with his bicycle. We waited and the Chinese said, "Coming soon, coming soon." We waited and waited and nothing happened. Finally the Chinese

borrowed father's bicycle and went off. He came back and said, "Coming soon." Father had not wanted to leave us, but now he decided he'd better. He took his bicycle and he headed to the mission. He was barely gone when a truck came and the Japanese piled all our stuff in the truck. The Chinese motioned us up on top of it and the two Japanese and a Chinese jumped in the back. We told them we wanted to go to the Ching I Middle School. They went into the city. Instead of turning east they turned west. And we said, "Government buildings." Sure enough they drove into a compound and drove around. A big, fat Chinese general with a red sash across his chest came out. We told him we were American sisters and the Japanese had taken us away. Now we had come back. And he said, "Did that American plane that just landed bring you?" And we said yes. He said, "Go on." He went into the building laughing.

So sitting on top of all this baggage in a truck, we drove up to Ching I School. And nobody knew we were coming. And was there excitement! In all that excitement of yelling and greeting and so on, those Japanese unloaded that truck and carried the things way to the back of the compound of the sisters' house. And there we were. Finally a brother and Father Polio showed up. When Father Henkels reached the mission and told them about our arrival, brother had hitched up his oxcart, a donkey cart. They had taken the school children from the primary school which was right across the road and they marched out to the airfield. And we were gone.

That evening Sister Agnes Loyola and I packed our stuff on the donkey cart that came in from the southern suburb with their milk. We moved about five blocks over to the central mission station where they had their central house, as she and I were going to live there. Sister St. Francis

took charge of the school again. Sister Francis DeSales and Sister Bernadette went across to Hsin Hsiang to help Bishop Megan. So in a week the five of us were in three different places.

Now the question was our house. When they would take them away, nobody knew. Before they interned these Japanese, one of the Japanese consuls sent the keys to four houses to brother and said, "As I understand it, the furniture in these four houses, at least most of it, belongs to the Catholic mission." Brother got the carts and the coolies and they went to the four houses. Brother showed the coolies what to take and what not to take. He couldn't stop them. They took every stick of furniture, everything they found in those houses, into those carts. When I got back to Kaifeng, brother had two big rooms that had been dormitory rooms for students piled high with furniture. You couldn't see what there was. Some of it was Japanese; some of it was ours, but it was piled sky high.

This man also told brother that before the Chinese took him away, he would try to get a message to him that we could be there to claim the building. About two weeks passed when one noon brother came in and said, "We've got to go. The Chinese are taking the Japanese out." We went over. When we got there brother said, "I'm going to go and get help. You need help." So he went off. Pretty soon one of the boys who had worked for us came; then another one that had worked for us came, and finally the head servant of the mission came. While the Chinese were gathering up the Japanese, I stood on top of the porch. The same Japanese that had taken us to Weihsien, had shaken hands with us, came up and said goodby. We shook hands.

Then brother said, "Now we have to work fast." The Chinese were there to grab the Japanese furniture. This consul had gone through the house and he had marked every piece of furniture that belonged to the house with a "Tien," which is the first character of "Tien Chu Tang." I stood in the main entrance and tried to stop the coolies from grabbing this stuff. I had found keys for the dining room and for one storeroom upstairs so that I could have some place to put this stuff. I would grab a piece of furniture and haul it to the dining room. I had one of our men in there watching the stuff. Pretty soon the same piece would come out with another coolie. So all afternoon we were trying to stop them from taking our stuff. Finally they started taking the drapes down. Well, I stopped that. I put the drapes upstairs in the storeroom. I locked the dining room and I locked the storeroom. Brother came and said I could go home; he would stay overnight.

The next morning the store room upstairs was empty, was open. Brother had stopped them from taking the parlour rug and had put it in the garage that the Japanese had built. That was gone. They kept hauling things out and they kept taking the pictures off the wall. Finally the Chinese in charge said, "Take your things and get out of here. This is government property." And I said, "You take your things and get out of here. This is mission property." Finally Monday morning shortly before they finished, this fellow who was in charge walked out, flinging his shoulders and looking as mad as a hatter. I motioned to our man to close the gate. I went back in and sat down in Sister Francetta's office. It was the only place that had a chair, and I wept.

Pretty soon brother came and asked about repairs. I said, "Yes, but I've got no money at all." He said, "We have money. When we saw the war ending we asked the Japanese, 'What are you going to do to pay for the use of this house?'" The Japanese gave them flour and gave them piece goods (cloth) and they gave them clothing. He said, "We can sell as we need to. There is nothing to buy in this town, anyhow; you can sell it." I said, "I want Chin, our old carpenter, back." He said, "I don't know. To support his family, Chin is selling old bottles and newspapers and things on the street." About an hour later Chin was there with his two husky sons and I said, "Chin, we have to fix up this house so the sisters can come home. Have you got time?" He said, "If sister wants me, I have nothing else to do." And so he did.

One of the things that the Japanese had done was build Japanese rooms into foreign rooms. They had put a kitchen into one of the bedrooms upstairs and put in a cement floor and cement sink. They put a hole through the wall and ran a drain pipe out with the water running down the side of the building. We got that floor out, down to the old floor that was under it. There were also Japanese rooms in the buildings near the gate that we had used for private classes and meetings. We pulled those Japanese rooms out and the floors were gone. There was nothing but a hole.

We gradually started fixing up the place and cleaning it up. I went around the streets and I spied some of our furniture. And some of our rugs. I spied some of our dishes. Some things I bought back and some I didn't. The Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament had saved some of our mattresses by insisting, when Italy left the war and the Japanese interned them, that they had to have them. They had taken some silverware and our dishes, so they had that. As we got the place fixed up and varnished and so on, we gradually

started moving the furniture over. One set of Chinese parlor furniture I was interested in; 22 pieces that a Swiss woman had given us. I didn't know whether that was there and brother said he didn't either. The day that I went in the storeroom and found that furniture I was pretty happy. All but one stool was there of that. Gradually we got the thing fixed up.

It was the beginning of December and the boys were doing the last scrubbing in the kitchen. I think we scrubbed the kitchen floor five times, a tile floor, to get all that black gunk off. I was washing the dishes and putting them in the cupboard when Sister St. Francis sent word that she was going out to the railroad station to meet representatives from the U. N. and I should come with her.

One day shortly before when I had been working in the house, our gateman came in and said there was a man to see me. I said, "Well, bring him in." He didn't want to. So I said, "I will go out on the porch." Down the walk came this fellow. I thought, "Who are you?" He started up the steps; I realized it was the same fellow that was in charge of the coolies that hauled out our furniture. He looked embarrassed and I looked embarrassed. He came up and he had a name card. He held it out with both hands and said, "Mr. Chi's name card." There was a woman coming, a representative of the U. N., and she was supposed to sleep in our house. She was supposed to have a bedroom and a kitchen and an office and a parlour. "Mr. Chi knows better than that." He said, "Do you know Mr. Chi?" And I said yes. He was the secretary general of the provincial government. I said, "I'll talk to Mr. Chi about that." So he went off.

I knew that they had come with this business to the Catholic mission. Sister said, "This representative of the U. N. could stay at the school." I said, "She has to have this kitchen and she has to have..." "Come and see," she said. "What's good enough for us is good enough for her." So that was the arrangement made. But a couple of nights later Sister Agnes Loyola and I were having supper together (we always had our meals together and I would walk back and forth) when Sister St. Francis came in and said, "They've been up at school again and now there are two coming from the U. N.--a man and a woman. They insist that they are going to live together in the same place." I told them, "Not in the girls' school. No man in a girls' school." By that time, this Chinese man came in and said, "Oh, please help me. I don't know how to take care of foreigners."

By sending messages back and forth across the road, it was finally decided that the man could stay at the bishop's house and the woman could stay with Sister Agnes Loyola. They could both eat over with Agnes Loyola. So that was arranged.

When Sister St. Francis sent this message that they were coming by train, I thought that was funny because by that time a plane went over. I thought, good--they've come by plane and we don't have to go to the railroad station. But she came anyhow and I said, "Didn't they come on that plane?" "No," she said, "All the schools are marching out to the railroad station and we're going too." And we waited and we waited. We waited a couple of hours. It got to be 5:00 and it was getting cold. The station master came out of the hut that was being used for a station and he saw me. He said, "What are you doing here?" We told him we were waiting for a train with the U. N. representatives. He said, "No train until 8:30 tonight. It's coming from the west." From the west, they had to cross the new bed of the

Yellow River or the new Yellow River on a flat boat and then catch the train for Kaifeng. We went off to the novitiate, which was just a couple of blocks from there, and got some supper and went back.

By that time the hut was filling up with government officials and their wives. Everybody was talking: "Oh, when did you get back and how did you come?" They had all come from Chungking, from the west, overland and then down the river by boat and so on and so forth. And we were pretty glad that we had been gone so we fitted in with that group.

In comes this little fellow that had made the arrangement for the UNRRA representatives. "Oh," he said, "Here you are. Five more Americans came this afternoon and they're going to live at Huang Ta Wang Miao Men." Which meant Sister St. Francis and I, our place. "Huang Ta Wang Miao Men" was the name of the temple which was a block up from us and our street was named after that temple. We looked at each other and thought, "Oh, what now?" The train came in and these two people got out. The woman looked so scared and so tired. I said, "How long have you been in China?" She said, "Six weeks in China and four weeks on this trip from Chungking." They came overland from Chungking.

I said, "There are five American officers in town." "Oh, don't let them go without us," she said. There was music and there was bowing and there were flowers presented. Finally the people were shown into a car. Everybody else crowded into the cars. Finally they motioned to Sister St. Francis and me to get into a car. We got into the city and, instead of turning east, they turned west. Here was Sister Agnes Loyola at home waiting for these two people. I said to Sister St. Francis, "They are going to the governor's place." So they did.

When we got there, we let everybody else get out. Then we said to the driver, "Catholic mission." He took us there. We got there and Sister Agnes Loyola said that in the afternoon she had been getting this meal ready when the head servant from across the street came over and said, "Come on over quick. The Americans are here and nobody can talk to them." She went out and here were five Americans. There was a jeep and there was a truck loaded high. There was Brother Francisco and there was Father Polio and a young Chinese man.

She said to the officers, "Oh, what can I do for you?" They said, "We came into town, unloaded our plane, got this truck to put our stuff in. We went to the governor and he said there was a place we could have. He sent this young man with us and nobody seems to know where it is." She said to the young man, "What place?" And he said, "Huang Ta Wang Miao Men." She said, "Oh"; brother said, "Oh"; Father Polio said, "Oh." Major Redford looked at them and said, "What's the matter with the place?" Sister Agnes Loyola said, "Yes, the Japanese used it and the Chinese seem to think they should have it, but it belongs to the Benedictine Sisters. Only Sister Wibora can give permission to live in it."

Then the captain said, "Is there a good restaurant in town?" Sister Agnes Loyola said, "You mean your men are hungry?" "Well, we haven't had anything to eat since 8:00 this morning." So brother said that he'd give them something to eat. And they could stay overnight, Father Polio said. They drove their jeep and the truck into the compound and closed the gate; so that was it. Brother gave the American officers a lunch and Sister Agnes Loyola gave them dinner that night. She wasn't too surprised when we told her the woman wasn't coming for dinner. Then I had to walk home again, several blocks.

The next morning we were having breakfast together as we always did. I came over for mass and then I had breakfast with her. Someone knocked on the dining room door and she said, "Come in." In walked Major Redford and Captain Pierce. She said, "Major Redford, this is Sister Wibora." And he said, "What about it?" Just like that. And I said, "Nothing doing." After a little while Father Polio came over and kind of hinted that the vicar thought I should let them have our place. But he said the vicar suggested other places to show them. Sister St. Francis and I, the two officers and Father Polio would go along in the jeep.

The major insisted that he wanted to see our place first. So we went and saw it and that was just too bad. We went to other places and looked around; Major Redford would say, "I wouldn't have my men live in that place. I'd rather set up tents than have them live in that place." Finally about 11:30 in the morning we were outside the city in a mission compound. I said, "All right," and I gave it to them.

I hadn't had one word from the Sisters in Peking from the time I left at the end of August. This was the beginning of December. I had fixed up the house for them and not one word. There was no communication. No letters, nothing between the two places. We went back to the mission and Sister St. Francis and I went in to eat dinner with Sister Agnes Loyola and the men at the bishop's place. I said, "I'm going to go right over. Those men are not going to hesitate a second." I was about half way over when the jeep stopped and she said, "How do we get in the back gate? The truck's on the way." I went over and I picked out the things I wanted--my typewriter and my sewing machine and some bedding, and they hauled me back to Sister Agnes Loyola's place. These American officers had it for four months until

first of April. That's the way I gave them our place to use after I had worked October, November, December--almost three months--to get it in order, in shape.

It was the beginning of December that the Graves Registration team, those American officers who were to look for bodies in Honan, moved into our convent. The second plane that came in for them, bringing supplies and more men for a total of 12, went back to Shanghai with the two UNRRA people in it. Things went along until the beginning of January when one day the vicar came over to Sister Agnes Loyola's house.

I had moved in with her. The vicar said to me, "Come over to our parlor. There are five men there from the government. They insist that UNRRA is sending people in and they want them to live in your convent."

I: Why did everyone want to live in your convent?

MUEHLENBEIN: Basically that was because the Chinese government was trying to "claim" this property as Japanese property. It was to take another couple of confrontations before they stopped "claiming" it as confiscated Japanese property.

The vicar said, "No matter what I tell them, they won't listen." Sister Agnes Loyola came along and heard that and she said, "I'm going with you. If there are people to put up, I'll have to put them up."

The two of us went across the street and the vicar said to these men, "This is Sister Wibora. She is the one who is in charge of that house and she told the officers they could live in it." They ignored me entirely. The Chinese representatives were speaking English, not Chinese. They ignored me entirely and kept asking the vicar, "Who said these men could live in that house?" He would say,

"It belongs to the Benedictine Sisters and Sister Wibora let them live in it." Well, this thing went on for a half hour. I was ignored entirely until Sister Agnes Loyola said, "I have room for three women." "That's just exactly what it is. Three women and five men. How many have you room for, Bishop?" And he said, "Five men." And they said, "Fine, fine. That's great!" So that was settled that way. We got outside and I said to Sister Agnes Loyola, "Why did you say that? The bishop was trying to make the Chinese take care of their own affairs." She said, "I was so cold I would have promised anything to get out of there."

I didn't even go back into her house. I went straight over to our house and called for the major in charge. I told him what had happened and told him that I didn't want UNRRA living in the house because the officers were leaving at the beginning of April, but UNRRA would stay maybe two, three years. In the meantime our sisters were waiting in Peking to come down. Major Redford said he would take care of it. Later in the afternoon he sent me a note that said he had contacted the governor through his liaison The governor had assured him that UNRRA would live somewhere else and that no more demands would be made for that building.

It was the beginning of January when one day a plane came over. The American officers thought it was their supply plane. They rushed to the airfield only to find that it was the UNRRA. Captain Pierce came with the man in charge (I don't remember his name) and he said, "Sister, he said, I'm sorry. I hear you are ready for three women and five men. We are five women and two men." "Oh," Sister Agnes Loyola said, "We've only got room for three." He said, "What can I do? I can't put them out in the street? Maybe we can put two beds in a room." Sister said, "You can't, but you can come up and look."

There were five bedrooms upstairs. I had one and she had one, and there were the three on the other side of the stairs. He agreed that you couldn't put two beds in those rooms. Finally Sister Agnes Loyola said, "Well, we can move out the parlor furniture, store it and put up two beds in the parlor." So that's what they did. They just hauled out the parlor furniture. They brought over made-up beds from the bishop's place and plunked them in the parlor. (The parlor had two bedrooms up above it. So here we were, ready for five women. Captain Pierce said, "We'll give them dinner tonight and we'll bring them over after dinner."

After dinner when the rap at the door came, the door opened and the first one who stepped in said, "Sisters, I'm back." It was the woman who had been there the beginning of December. The next woman in said, "Don't you remember me from Weihsien? You were in the Weihsien Camp with us." There was another American woman and two Australians--young girls. So here we were, five women and two sisters in this little house. There was a small room at the end of the hall that the Chinese sister in charge of the primary school used as an office, and there was a piano in it. At the other end of the hall was the kitchen, which was an annex, and the bathroom. All that was left to us was the dining room.

End of Side one - Tape two

The man in charge of UNRRA had two secretaries--these two young Australian girls. They had a lot of work to do, but they had no typewriter, no office, nothing. Sister Agnes Loyola and I had our typewriters and so they used those.

One morning brother knocked on the door and I opened the dining room door. "Oh, Sister," he said. "This can't go on. You people have no privacy." There he saw these two girls typing and this man working hard. He said, "I'm going across the street and ask the vicar if we can't open up Bishop Tacconi's suite. Bishop Tacconi had returned to Rome and had died. They had closed his suite and were using the rest of the house. He went over and came back. He took the UNRRA man over and showed him Bishop Tacconi's suite and his bedroom and the parlor that was the parlor for the house and told them that they could have that. UNRRA fixed that up for themselves--put a stove in. They were very happy to get this, especially the parlor, because so many Chinese officials had been coming to see them and the only place was this dining room in the convent.

The first Sunday they were there the UNRRA people wanted to put on a reception. It was a reception in which all kinds of Chinese officials were invited and the Graves Registration Team, 12 officers, and the sisters. Here we were with this little room. They were happy with that arrangement. And brother was feeding them all--the whole group. In the evenings they would stand around our stove in the dining room and sister would make some salted peanuts or barley syrup cookies for them. Peanuts are a Honan product and barley syrup was used for candy in those areas.

That was all right until--was it the beginning of February--another plane came across. The Registration Team raced out to the airfield. It was a UNRRA plane. This time there were two more women; I don't know how many men. When we opened the door, here was Captain Pierce and we said, "Where is Mr. So-and-So?" He said, "Their plane came in and there is more personnel." And under my breath I said, "Any women?" And he said, "Two." This man went off and he came back and said, "I am sorry, Sister, but what can we do with these women? We have to have a place for them." So Sister Agnes Loyola said, "Maybe we can move the piano and the furniture out of the office." He said, "We've got two

narrow stretchers which stand a few inches from the floor. We can put those in there." That's what we did. Those two new women, with just about a couple of inches between those two stretchers, used that room. UNRRA had been trying and trying to get quarters for themselves. All the missionaries--Catholic and Protestant--were trying to help them find quarters, but every building they found, the governor said, "I am sorry, but the military is using that." Finally one day outside the city they spied through a broken wall of the Baptist compound, two foreign houses. And they said, "What about those houses?" The English woman from the China Inland Mission said, "Oh, those were for foreign personnel that was connected with the post office. I bet you can have that."

So he went and got those two buildings. They began fixing those up and that's where their living quarters were. They still didn't have offices. On the same street as ours, about three blocks down, was the YMCA. It was standing there and not being used. The head UNRRA man just went and said, "I want that building." And he got it. And that was where the officers were then.

Oh, it was just two months. It was the beginning of March when they moved out into their own quarters and Sister Agnes Loyola and I were alone again. Then in the beginning of April when the last of the Graves Registration Team went, I had our place back. The two of us were living separately again. In the meantime, no letters had come from Peking for me. I kept writing and heard nothing. In Peking they were wondering why I didn't write. Just before Christmas a Chinese soldier came through the Communist lines and brought a message to the wife of his commanding officer whom the commanding officer had left behind in Kaifeng when he was flown up to Peking. The soldier was going back. The wife wanted him to stay. No, he was going back to Peking. And so we gave him letters.

The Providence Sisters sent letters for theur sisters and I for our sisters because we hadn't heard from them. We never expected that those letters would get through. Christmas Eve he appeared at Pa Ta Wan with those letters. He had gotten back through the line and he would not give those letters to anybody but the sisters. So that was the first news they had from me and that was the last letter I had written. In January my other letters started coming. They came backwards, telling them about the place.

There is a joke connected with this. The Marines used to come out and see the sisters. These were boys, 18, 19 years old. The sisters were good to the Marines and the Marines were good to the sisters. One of them was Jimmy. He was 18. He was interested in China, he liked China, he was interested in the Chinese language. Sister got him a teacher. One day he appeard just as they had gotten the letter from me which described the condition of the house when I first saw it. And so they read it to him. He sat back and listened and pretty soon he said, "Such young minds--such old frames!" They just about tea kettled! After that we called each other the "old frames."

Years later, we were living in Taipei in our second house. When the rest had gone to church, I was home alone, and up the walk came a man and a woman with bicycles. I went out and he said, "I'm Jimmy." Although I had not met him, I felt I knew him. When Sister Ronayne came back from church, we were sitting there talking and she started telling this story. His wife looked at him aghast and said, "Jimmy, how old were you then, 18?" He was in Taipei on a foundation grant studying Chinese culture and things. He had kept up his interest in China. Well, anyway the letters went through.

Then in March, Sister Marie Gratia of the Providence Sisters came down. In Hsin Hsiang, across the old bed of the Yellow River from us, was General George Marshall and his team, trying to get the Nationalists and the Communists to work together. Every week the plane came down from Peking to bring them supplies. Sister Gratia got a ride on one of those planes to Hsin Hsiang. When our house was empty, I wrote the sisters and said they could come. The place was ready for them. I said, "If you can get a supply plane from Peking, it is three hours by jeep across the old bed of the Yellow River." That's what the soldiers had done. Three hours to Kaifeng; that was it. She wrote and said, "I'll be on the plane."

Week after week, week after week, nothing happened. Finally she wrote and said, "Expect me when you see me!" It was the beginning of August on Monday noon when I was just setting the table for myself; I almost dropped the cup when I heard her voice in the hall. I went out and she said, "Open the back gate. The jeep and trailer are coming in." Then she said, "We've been on the road 24 hours." And I said, "From Peking?" I could imagine those officers going through the Communist lines. She said, "No, from Hsin Hsiang."

They left Hsin Hsiang Sunday noon and took no lunch or anything along because I had said three hours. Pretty soon they were bogged down in mud. They had to dig the jeep out or wait for another UNRRA truck to come along and pull them out. It went on like that until 10:30 that night; they decided to stop. And the men lay down on the ground. There were two officers and Father Gerard and the women--Sister Francetta and the Italian sister and a Chinese girl who was heading for Rome--in the jeep.

About 2:00 a storm came up, so they headed back to a farm house that they had seen and begged the farmer for some shelter. All he had was a shed where his ox was in. He took the ox out and the men just fell on the hay and went to sleep. The three women huddled together, and the rain came down in the open door and in the open window and through the thatched roof. They got sister's umbrella and put it up and sat there. They had a flashlight and pretty soon that rolled away. That's the way they spent the night.

In the morning they tried to get some breakfast, and all they succeeded in getting was some hot water. They hadn't had anything to eat since the noon before. And they had a few more "sticks-in-the-muds" and had to be pulled out. Finally just before noon, they saw the walls of Kaifeng. Right outside the gate was a watermelon seller. Sister said that he was so surprised when they jumped out of that jeep, and one after the other they opened those watermelons and started to eat them. Then she said they piled three more in the jeep because they didn't know if I had anything. So here they were with the jeep and the trailer--just mud and their bags, mud. They had been on the road 24 hours.

This was the beginning of August. The first thing Father Gerard said to me, "How do I get a job?" I said that the university came back in February. The university had roamed all over the interior of China during the war as most of the universities did. I said, "They have been here several times asking for English teachers. I could not take the job because I was alone." He said, "Whom do I contact?" I said I would contact the university. One of the teachers from the English department came and said, "Who's back?" I said, "Father Gerard." "Where's Father Clougherty?" I said, "He's in Rome." "Where's Sister Ronayne?" I said, "In Peking with no transportation."

The teacher came back the next day and said, "The president of the university said he will send a plane for her." The president of the university for Sister Ronayne! But Sister Francetta said, "No. No Chinese plane!" She wrote to the same officer who had gotten her on. This officer surprised the sisters when he walked in one evening and said, "You're leaving Saturday morning. You better get packed."

Saturday night came and we waited and waited, hoping that they would come and nothing happened. Sunday noon we were ready to eat when here was Sister Ronayne's voice in the hall. I went out and here were the two sisters. She said, "Open the back gate for the jeep. Captain Davies is driving in." Captain Davies had been one of the Registration Team. I went out and here he was. The day before there had been two planes from Peking. He was in one and the sisters were in the other. He didn't see the sisters until that evening in Hsin Hsiang when Bishop Megan gave a dinner for the officers.

Sister Regia said he sat across from her and looked at her and looked at her. Finally he said, "You remind me of Sister Wibora." She said, "I belong to the same community." And he said, "Do you want to go to Kaifeng?" She said yes. And he said, "I'll ask the bishop for his jeep and I'll take you. So he did. They took only three hours across the river because it wasn't the rainy season. So that's what we were then; we were four. The rest had gone home after the war. Christmas time Sister Ursuline came back and then we were five. But that was our reunion after the war.

Sister Ronayne and I went back to the university and started teaching there again. There is a joke there, too. Before the war we had both taught at the compound within the city and we could use rickshas. But now they had taken over some of the Japanese barracks outside the city for classes. I had to go to a set that was quite near the city. I could take a ricksha but Sister Ronayne was way out in the country. She had to use the university transportation which was a truck.

The truck was meant for the professors, but the students would swarm it. The driver would sit there and he wouldn't budge because he had too many people. We used to worry about Sister Ronayne--how she would get out and how she would get back. But that was the way we went until I left for home.

I: Sister, let me take you back to the beginning of your experiences in Kaifeng. Let me ask you some additional questions. What was your policy about taking home leave and furlough? You went directly from Peking to Kaifeng. You were there all during the war.

MUEHLENBEIN: We had no policy. None of us had been home. The first one to go home was Sister Francetta; Sister Francetta had gone home in 1938 because we wanted to build our convent. She said, "If we are going to build, I'll have to go and get the money for it." And so she did. She went home in 1938. By that time the Japanese had opened the railroad line north again. She came back in 1939.

In the meantime, when she got up to Peking, she realized that there were sisters going to the language school. When she got home, she got permission for some of us to enter the language school. The first we heard from her when she got home was that I should go up to the language school. So in January of 1939, I went up to the language school. And I stayed there until--was it August or September?

I got down to Kaifeng just two days before she arrived from the States with two more sisters whom she had gotten while she was home. It was then that we built our convent. It was under Japanese domination, but the city was quiet and so on. We had bought the land before the war even started--the Chinese-Japanese war. We built the convent and we moved in January, 1941. We moved in there and then we turned our old convent into a poor school. The dispensary, in the meantime, had been going in a Chinese compound next to what had been our old home. It stayed there until it was closed with Pearl Harbor.

I: Why did you go back to language school at that time?

MUEHLENBEIN: Because Sister Francetta saw that there were sisters at the language school. You see, we couldn't go there at first because no sisters had ever done it. You know how it goes. When I went up to the language school, we had to stay overnight at Hsi Hsuchow I went up with two Providence Sisters who were just going up on business. Then the second night we stayed overnight in Tsinan. At Tsinan there were the Franciscan Sisters--the Hospital Sisters. When they realized I went up to the language school, a month later some of their sisters showed up. By February we were three different communities at the language school. And we did have a good time! Oh! Now, why were we dressed differently? Why weren't we all just the same? Were we all the same kind of Catholics? Was there a difference between us, like between the Anglicans and the Presbyterians and the Baptists and so on and so forth? They just couldn't get it, those Chinese teachers. Why weren't we all dressed the same?

I: And you felt that you needed some more language study?

MUEHLENBEIN: Well, we didn't get much those first two years. I mean to say, at least I didn't. I had those extra months there.

I: Sister, when the Chinese asked the difference between the Protestants and the Catholics, how did you explain that to them?

MUEHLENBEIN: That was a question too. Sometimes my whole hour with a private teacher would be that discussion--in Chinese. They would say to me, like this one teacher did who was Presbyterian, "We believe this, or we have this." I would say, "The Catholics had it before you did." One day she started reciting the Apostles' Creed. I started reciting ours in Chinese. They couldn't get that point that we believed the same things. Then I would say, "We had it before you did."

In Taipei one time one of my students said to me, "What's the difference between Catholics and Christians?" And I said, "Catholics are the first Christians." He just about tea kettled. He said, "What was I supposed to say?" And I said, "Between Catholics and Protestants." I said, "We're all Christians." And, of course, the main difference was that we believed in the Pope as the head of the church and the Protestant denominations didn't. That was my answer to the chief difference. But you could always find something that was the same.

I: Sister, when you were in Kaifeng, did you have any contact with Russians who were there or Jews who were coming in from Europe or Chinese Jews?

MUEHLENBEIN: The Jews had been there long before the war in Europe. Was it in 1600 when the Jesuits were in Peking at the court, the emperor's court? One day a young Chinese (he felt he was Chinese) had come up from Kaifeng to take part in the Imperial examinations. He went to visit this Jesuit and on this Jesuit's desk he saw a Hebrew Scroll--a

part of a Bible. The young Chinese recognized it and he started talking about it. Then the Jesuits realized that there was this group of Jews in Kaifeng and they had become Chinese-ized, but they were still Jews. Maybe around 1930 or so a group of Presbyterians were digging for a building. They came across the stone that showed them that this site was the site of the old Jewish synagogue in Kaifeng.

I: Were there any members of that Jewish community still there?

MUEHLENBEIN: Yes. There were Jews. They were in a certain section of the city, but they were Chinese as far as everything else went. There were also Mohammedans. Russians? Chiang Kai-shek chased the Russians out in 1926. They were not around. There were Mohammedans and there were Jews in Kaifeng. On the streets we didn't know who they were. There still was a synagogue, a small synagogue, just about two blocks from Sister Agnes Loyola's house.

I: How large was the Jewish community; do you have any idea?

MUEHLENBEIN: I have no idea how large that community was, no.

I: Did they have a rabbi and did they have some sort of schooling so that they could perpetuate the faith?

MUEHLENBEIN: They still had a school when they were in Kaifeng, but I don't think they had services or anything. We just knew that that section was Jewish.

I: Were they still there after the war? Was the community still functioning?

MUEHLENBEIN: I wouldn't know. But they were Chinese in everything else. You wouldn't know the difference between them and the rest of the Chinese. For instance, the Mohammedans had certain jobs that nobody else had a right to. One of them was well-digging. When we had our well dug, we had all those people--the Mohammedans.

I: Why did they have the exclusive rights to well-digging?

MUEHLENBEIN: I don't know how far back that went, but they were the only well-diggers.

I: Sister, will you explain what happened to the Italian and German fathers and sisters during the war and then what happened to them after the war. How were they treated since they were on the side of the Axis powers?

MUEHLENBEIN: When the Japanese came into Kaifeng, of course, everything was fine because Italy was on the side of the Axis. That's why the Italians could help us so much. But after we got up to Peking, then Italy went out of the war; then the Japanese were really mad. So they rounded up the Italian fathers and sisters. The Italians said,"When you were rounded up, we were there to help you, but we were there with no one, except the SVD fathers from Hsin Hsiang and they were all American."

When the Italians were taken, the German SVDs came in and took over. The Germans tried to help the Italians. In a couple of months, the Japanese let the Italians go and everything was all right again. But they sure were mad when they went out of the war. On the other side, where the Chinese were, Bishop Megan, for instance, I said he managed to escape. He was in Sian, which was under the Italians when the trouble started, and he helped out his German areas too. When one nationality was taken away,then another one moved in. As I said in Chow Tsun, there was an Irish priest among the group; so he could take over because he wasn't interned when the others were.

I: With the various nationalities involved in the different Catholic missions, how did they handle politics? Did the Germans hold anything against the Americans?

MUEHLENBEIN: I don't think from a political standpoint. From a national standpoint the French were very jealous of their territory. They didn't want to let other nationalities in. But politically I don't think so.

I: Did you ever see any signs of a Nazi party among some of the German communities in China?

MUEHLENBEIN: Not among the missionaries.

I: Did you ever know if anything like that ever happened among the civilians?

MUEHLENBEIN: In Kaifeng, before the Japanese came in, there was a German man, a professor at the university. One day Father Clougherty came in looking like, oh, I don't know what. We said, "What's the matter?" He said this professor had been murdered and he had been called to identify the body. The university compound was inside the city wall and the city walls, you know, were high and big. This professor used to like to walk around the city wall. He had been murdered and he had been scalped.

Father Clougherty identified him by the ring and so on. And why or what we don't know. All they found in his room--Father Clougherty was there when they went in his room--was literature on Germany. Now whether he was a spy and the Chinese found out and that was the end of it or what, we don't know.

There is another story. After Bishop Tacconi went back to Rome and died, then Monsignor Barosi was appointed as vicar. He wanted to make a tour of his vicariate. He went down into this town of Tinghsien. The priests there received him as did two other priests from two other towns.

Those two towns were in what we called no man's land, between the Chinese and the Japanese lines. Tinghsien was in the Japanese line. So the three priests and Father Barosi went to this one town. They got there and the Christians received them. They went to church, had a Te Deum and then the Christians served them a dinner.

During the dinner 16 men dressed as soldiers and one dressed as an officer came in and drove out all the Christians. They locked the gate. They had these four men plus the bishop's personal servant who was Chinese. The "soldiers" told him, "You're Chinese. We don't have anything against you." They locked the servant in the sacristy and he escaped from there. Around 6:30 the soldiers pulled out. Then the Christians broke into the mission and they couldn't find these men. They finally found them in the well. They had all four been murdered and put in the well. So this servant, escaping, got to another mission and got the word to Kaifeng. Now, what to do? Four men had been sacrificed already and to bring those bodies back into Kaifeng, out of no man's land, was impossible.

Two missionaries from the other side, the Chinese side, managed to get in there. When they got there, the Christians had washed the bodies, reclothed the bodies and put them in coffins. They had the coffins in the church and were keeping watch over them. And so they were buried there. They couldn't bring the bodies back to Kaifeng.

When we first came to Peking, there was a lot of that kind of thing out in the western part of China: sisters taken prisoner, priests and bishops killed and so on. That was the Communists. But what this was, we don't know. We didn't know then and I don't think they know now. Was it Japanese inspired? Was it Communist? Were they really soldiers or what?

I: Sister, when the Baptists were being repatriated on the Gripsholm and the message came that you should stay, why did they want you to stay when there had been the possibility of your going on the Gripsholm?

MUEHLENBEIN: I don't know. That would be the attitude of "you don't leave."

I: When you speak of the apostolic delegate, was that someone from Rome who was in China?

MUEHLENBEIN: Yes. At that time we didn't have any ambassador of the United States to China. We just had a minister, a plenipotentiary. The apostolic delegate was something like that, you know.

I: Do you have any idea why they moved you to Weihsien when they did?

MUEHLENBEIN: They were putting all of the missionaries (enemy nationals) north of the Yellow River into this camp at Weihsien and those south into a camp at Shanghai. Up to that time we had been in separate camps and now they were in those areas. And we were no longer under the military although the guards were military. We were under the consular service. We were continually told, "You are not prisoners of war. You are civilian internees."

I: When you were going enroute to Weihsien, were you able to see what the conditions were like along the way?

MUEHLENBEIN: They were just typical Chinese farms and things, you know.

I: You didn't see a lot of destruction or...?

MUEHLENBEIN: No. You see, the Japanese managed to take the cities and to run the railroads. But they wouldn't run the railroads at night. They were afraid to. They were afraid to go outside of the cities. For instance, when we built our house, we needed brick. Brother went and had some kilns near the city make us brick. They started to bring the brick into the city. The Japanese would stop them and order the brick to their building sites. Although they were paid for them, the men were angry because they didn't want to work for the Japanese.

Then brother went farther out into the country, only about 10 li which is only a little over three miles, and ordered the brick. It was a long haul in carts to bring that brick in, but they wanted the work and they did it. Brother had some molds made with the three characters Tien Chu Tang and the Japanese were disgusted. They wouldn't take the brick. But they didn't dare go out that far to see that the brick was made for them.

It was just too dangerous for them. All the years of the war, they just held the railroad lines and a few cities. They really didn't have the countryside. What was there to destroy in the countryside? It was little mud villages and mud houses. You know, it wasn't much.

I: Let me ask you a few questions about your time at Weihsien. By the time you left, what was the medical condition of people? What was their health condition? You talked about the hospital work.

MUEHLENBEIN: We left after five months. Some of us needed medical help and needed it badly. But by the time the war was over, it was two years later! Father Ildephonse Rutherford of the Franciscans had been appointed chaplain for the camp. Therefore, when the rest of us left, he stayed, as did one group of sisters from Milwaukee to be teachers of the school. When he got back up to Peking after the war was over, he went to visit our sisters.

Sister Francetta said, "If you can imagine Father Ildephonse crying...." He was a big, heavy, jolly man. He cried when he told us how low the morale had been. The women were tearing each other's hair out. Everybody was fighting over everything. There were three Indian girls from India, beautiful. One of them couldn't walk because of deficiencies, and they said she never would. Another was blind. I don't know if she got her sight back. But they were in pitiful state by that time. Food was much lower than it was before. Their morale was so low that it was pitiful.

I: When you were there, how did you assign what tasks everyone should do, including some of the more unpleasant tasks such as the sanitation?

MUEHLENBEIN: You mean in the Weihsien Camp?

I: Yes.

MUEHLENBEIN: This group of people who was chosen as each group came in as their representatives, they formed a committee. And they assigned the tasks and they decided what was to be done. They moved the housing, like to get that hospital clear so that it could be used, and so on. These people did that.

I: What would happen if somebody didn't want to do the task that was assigned them?

MUEHLENBEIN: I don't know if there was anything like that. Oh, the men worked so hard.

I: How were the relationships among the different nationalities at the time you were there?

MUEHLENBEIN: Americans and the Belgians and the Dutch and the English were the highest population. There were a few others like these girls from India and there were some Chinese, who were from Hong Kong, that had British citizenships.

I: How was morale at the time you were there?

MUEHLENBEIN: When we left, the people kept saying, "What are we going to do? You people kept up the morale." So they were worried about that and things went from bad to worse. But, as I said, you stretch it out for two years and not enough food and all that; it was really hard.

I: Did the Pope think it would be good if you would be moved to Peking?

MUEHLENBEIN: It wasn't necessarily to Peking. From the south they went to other places. It was simply to get out of the camp and into religious houses. That's what we did in Peking. As I said, we American sisters--we were 48 from six different communities--and the Belgian sisters went back to Christ the King House. Others who had houses of their own went to their houses. The priests, the Franciscans, went to the Franciscan house. The Belgians had their own house and some went to a Jesuit house. Americans, the Benedictines for instance and the SVD, they went to the Franciscan house.

I: What kind of a religious life were you able to have in Weihsien? What kind of worship life?

MUEHLENBEIN: With 400 some priests, and in those days the priests always said a mass every day, that was a problem. We had no furniture, except the beds we had brought along and the school desks that had been thrown out of the building which early arrivals could scrounge. In our room, the beds were just tight together. There was a door at the end. You opened that door and there was the width of the building; there was this passage about the width of the door. So we set up a school bench on some bricks.

Mornings one priest would come in to say mass and another one to serve the mass and the third priest--every altar had three priests--was waiting outside. We had three masses. The Japanese didn't turn on the electricity until later. We got up at 4:30 in the dark, got dressed, and washed and made our beds. We straightened up so that the fathers could come and say mass. By 7:30 those three masses had to be finished because at 7:30 we had to be lined up in the yard for roll call.

The Providence Sisters had a bigger room and they managed to put up four altars. They had 11 masses and the SVD Fathers said their masses in that bedroom every morning. On Sunday we were usually allowed to use the auditorium. We had the service first, the Catholic. And they really were something. We had six bishops in camp. Usually every Sunday one of the bishops officiated and the others dressed in their regalia and sat on the stage. The Belgian Fathers took charge of the singing. The windows were always full, of this auditorium, every one was full of others listening in.

As soon as our mass was over, we dismantled the altar and things and the Protestants would have their services. Then a couple others would have theirs in the afternoon.

One had them in the evening. But that was it. When we got up to Peking, of course, we had the chapel in the compound because it was meant for 40 student sisters; so we managed.

I: During this period of internment in Kaifeng and Weihsien and later in Peking, how much news did you get of what was happening around the rest of China? How much news, if any, did you get from abroad?

MUEHLENBEIN: We had no contact abroad. The only contact that came in was a Red Cross card for Sister Francetta telling her that her mother had died. Otherwise, we got nothing all those years we were there.

In Weihsien Camp, any news that came, came over the wall from the Chinese. What was that drive in Africa that drove Rommel out of Africa? We found out about that and the paths and the roads at Weihsien, every little while a name would go up--such and such a road--relating that to the news we received. The day the Japanese realized we heard about Rommel's defeat, they were pretty mad. We knew what was going on--still we didn't know much.

As I said, we couldn't understand English any more when the war was over. We didn't know what a G.I. was. Up in Peking, of course, we got the daily news, but only such as the Japanese would let go in the papers. We didn't get anything else. The first letters we wrote went out that first plane that came in--the American plane that came in. Those officers told us to write and we wrote some short notes to let everybody know.

I: During that whole time people in America had no way of knowing whether you were still alive or where you were?

MUEHLENBEIN: No. Well, of course, through the Red Cross they would know pretty much.

I: At Weihsien and then in Peking, after the Japanese took roll call, did they interfere in your schedule the rest of the day?

MUEHLENBEIN: No, no. For instance, in Weihsien baseball teams would be formed. One of the teams, of course, was the fathers' team. The Japanese just loved baseball. Everytime there was a game, the Japanese soldiers or guards would line up watching. Finally, they wanted to play baseball, but the internees were afraid to play for fear what would happen if they lost-- if the Japanese lost. There always were officers there to listen to everything that we had in our recreation; for instance, our singing and our plays and things.

One of the last things that was put on for the general recreation--I don't know what the name of the poem was--it was an English poem that describes the elopement of a girl, somebody's daughter. The father goes after her and tries to bring her back. The internees made a parody of this. In the poems she gets into a boat and crosses a lake or something. They had this boat on a stage and they made these lakes. The father comes after her with a make-believe horse and he holds out an egg. She should come back so that she could have that egg. Then she didn't come back for her egg, and he held out two eggs. So the Japanese got the point of that and they almost stopped the entertainment. Shall I tell you about the eggs?

I: Yes, please explain the significance of the eggs.

MUEHLENBEIN: When we first got to Weihsien, the food wasn't the type of food for children at all. And mothers needed food for their children. The Chinese were still coming in and out working with the cesspools, working with this and working with that. I know the day that one of them called two of us into a corner of a kind of a deserted hut; the Chinese worker had a bunch of eggs that he had brought and wanted to sell those eggs.

That got people started in buying from the Chinese. Then there would be holes in the wall; eggs would come through and so on. The Japanese were madder than a hatter about it. Oh boy! But they couldn't stop it.

Finally the committee of the internees said if they were going to stop this, they would have to see that we could buy those things. They set up a kind of ration system where we each got a ration card. They had a building they set aside space in. Maybe once a week there would be a notice around: one egg per person, or an orange per person, or so many ounces of peanuts per person. We would grab our cards and would go and get it. We had to buy it.

We soon learned that the Europeans didn't think much of peanuts. To the Belgians peanuts were for animals, not for human consumption. We arranged with them that when there were peanuts, we would get their ration. When there were cigarettes, they would get our ration. We had brought a food chopper along. Out in the yard the fathers had built a little stove and a little pan for us out of bricks and mud. We would roast these peanuts and take the red shell off and run them through the food grinder about six or seven times. Then we would have peanut butter.

One day two of the Belgian fathers came and said, "Let us see what you are doing with your peanuts?" We said, "Okay, you come back at such and such a time and we will show you." They came back. They ran the food grinder and we made the peanut butter. And we didn't get their ration of peanuts anymore! Oh, all the different things! But that buying food through the wall, that was really something.

I: Sister, how did you get money during this time?

MUEHLENBEIN: You had to have it when you went in. Before we left, we sold everything we possibly could sell. We had old cameras and things like that and the Japanese were crazy about camera lenses. They wanted the lenses and they would buy those. We had some things on hand that we meant to use to build our dispensary in our compound. We sold those things. When the war first started, sister borrowed money from a Chinese who had U. S. money and was afraid to keep it. We would pay it back after the war. So we had that money. After we got up to Peking, sister borrowed money again from an Italian. He was trying to get rid of the money that the Japanese had and that would be no good after the war. We had to borrow.

I: Sister, in the 30s and up through 1945, what did you hear about the Chinese Communists?

MUEHLENBEIN: The Chinese Communists were around already when we first came to China. It was 1926 when Father Clougherty and the Providence Sisters had to leave Kaifeng. They left because of the Communists driving up from Hankow.

End of Side Two - Tape Two

In December 1936, the Communists managed to get a hold of Chiang Kai-shek in Sian and kept him prisoner. That was only the Christmas before the Chinese-Japanese war started. It was really hard to know what was going to happen, but they finally released him. Madame Chiang Kai-shek and an American, Donald, who was an advisor to Chiang Kai-shek, managed to get him released. But the Communists were there in the background all during the war. The trouble was that they were just simply biding their time until the war would get over. Then they would move in.

I: When you got back to Kaifeng and looked at the involvement of the Catholic missionaries in Kaifeng and looked at the Chinese Catholics, what changes did you notice in the church because of the war? How did the church survive the war?

MUEHLENBEIN: That was all right. All over the area, no matter who the missionaries were, they had done a lot for the people during the war. That was all right. And, of course, the missionaries had nothing to do with the Japanese. The Japanese had imprisoned the missionaries, and so on, so that was all in favor of the missionaries.

I: When you looked ahead in 1945, what did you anticipate your future would be in China?

MUEHLENBEIN: All I was interested in when I got back in 1945 was to get that house and property back and get the sisters back. But by 1947, I knew that the Communists would take over. They were prominent in that area. The first visitor from our Motherhouse came out in 1947 in September.

I: Who was that first visitor?

MUEHLENBEIN: We left our Motherhouse the end of August 1930. In all the years following no one from the Motherhouse came to visit the mission. Now, after the war, our then superior, Mother Rosamond, decided to come out in 1947.

I: Did she have difficulties getting to Kaifeng?

MUEHLENBEIN: We managed to get her up to Kaifeng on the last train that came up because the Communists were roaming between Hsuchow and Kaifeng. They could have struck at any time. To get out of Kaifeng (I went back with her then for my first home visit and she brought another sister to take my place) we depended on UNRRA to help us out. They flew us out with their UNRRA plane and we got back to Shanghai and got back to the States. That was in October because we reached the States on Halloween Eve. That was in October and by April the sisters had to move south. The Communists broke in and got into Kaifeng. There were horrible stories about that. But then the Communists withdrew again. They didn't really take it to keep until a few months later.

I: What exactly was UNRRA able to do in your area?

MUEHLENBEIN: That's the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. What they were interested in was getting the Yellow River controlled and getting the farmers back into the field. I just realized that last week when I was looking it up that this group stayed there longer than this organization was supposed to have been in existence. According to an encyclopedia I looked at, it went out in June in '47. They were still there in Kaifeng then in October 1947. When one of the first women that came in, she was telling about what "we're" going to do. "We're" going to accomplish this and "we're" going to do that. I kind of sat back and I said, "I don't think you will."

Before she left she came and said goodbye. She said, "You were right. We haven't scratched the surface." You know, you can't in China. You can't scratch the surface.

I: When Major Redford was staying in your facilities and was with the Graves Registration Team, what was the responsibility of the team?

MUEHLENBEIN: They were 12 men in all. They were really two different organizations with two majors. Major Redford was really in charge of one group and another major, I've forgotten his name, was in charge of another group. They were to recover bodies of American military personnel. They brought in 26 bodies in all from the surrounding territory. When the Chinese knew that was what they were looking for, they would come forward and say, you know, so-and-so was in such a plane crash and in such a place and the man was buried there. The missionaries would do this too. I know one day members of the team came over and they had a letter in German. It had come from one of the German missionaries and they wanted to know if Sister Agnes Loyola or I could read German.

I read it and told them that the priest in this town said that an American had crashed and an American had been buried there. So they sent a sergeant, or the corporal or whatever he was, and he came back with the body. They brought in 26 in all. The Japanese had built a two-car garage on our property. The first time that I came over there after the officers had been out on one of their trips and I got into the yard, I said, "What's this?" I went over and looked in the garage. Here were two coffins. By the time they shipped them out,

there were 26 coffins. There was one near Hsuchow where the Chinese had buried the man. They had a monument and they had a fence or something around the grave. They begged the officers to leave that body there--the Chinese did. The officers knew who it was and they left it there. Some of these people, they didn't know who they were.

I: Sister, how much did you know about George Marshall and his peace-keeping mission?

MUEHLENBEIN: As we felt then, and America knows now, it was something that couldn't succeed. America just insisted at that time that the Communists were only agrarian reformers, that they were not true Communists and that they could work with the Nationalist government. They were really Communists and they were not for working with anybody. They wanted to take over; the Communists wanted to. I think Marshall knew that too, but he had to follow orders and do his best.

I: What kinds of things were you hearing from the border areas where the Communists were already in control? What had you heard about what happened to the churches and the Christians in those areas?

MUEHLENBEIN: Shantung Province, as you know, is a big province. That's bordering on Honan there. The Communists were prowling in Honan from the time the war ended until they took over completely. They would strike a town at night. Usually they would raid the Catholic mission and make the missionaries march out with them. They would march for a couple of nights and then they would release the missionaries. At that point the missionaries would be far from their stations. One group after the other of sisters came into us like that--that had been taken away from their mission. One group came in while our superior, Mother Rosamond, was there. She got wide-eyed listening to their story.

I: Can you recall some of the things that the sisters were relating to your superior about some of their experiences?

MUEHLENBEIN: It was just about how the Communists had destroyed the property and how they had been marched and things of that kind. They really didn't kill any of them then. They marched them around the countryside and then released them.

I: How were your students at the university responding to what was happening in China? What were their feelings about the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communists at this time?

MUEHLENBEIN: I don't think there was any feeling against the Kuomintang, but I think they were very much afraid of the Communists. I know when the sisters finally pulled out of Kaifeng, some of the students heard that they were leaving. The sisters were still teaching at the university then and they could hardly get time to pack. The students were there begging them not to go and so on and so forth. We heard from some of them afterwards who had marched out ahead of the Communists and had marched for days and got themselves down to Nanking and to Shanghai. All said things were terrible, terrible in Kaifeng. One of them said bodies lay there unburied for days and days.

I: Even though you had already gone home by that time, can you describe the situation that led to your Benedictine Sisters leaving Kaifeng and where they went from Kaifeng and what eventually happened?

MUEHLENBEIN: As I said, the Communists were around. The sisters knew they would have to, but they didn't want to, leave. One day they said they were going and the next day they weren't. We had an organization in Shanghai called the Catholic Relief Services or something like that. Father McGoeg was in charge of that. Finally he sent word that a plane would be there on that day. "See that you are on that plane. Every American get out of Kaifeng." With them in Kaifeng was one of the SVD Fathers, an American. He was in charge of the relief services in Kaifeng, which was part of this organization--the Catholic Relief Services. He told the sisters to go. He said, "I'm supposed to go, but I can't leave here as long as the sisters stay here."

Finally the plane was supposed to come in on a certain day. The weather didn't permit and they didn't come in that day. So it came in the next day. Our sisters and the Providence Sisters and some Protestant missionaries and the Chinese Presbyterian bishop and others like that got on that plane which the Catholic Relief Services was in charge of and took them down to Shanghai.

When they got to Shanghai, this organization was placing them among different convents. First they lived with what they called the Social Service Sisters. Then afterward they moved to Aurora University. The Religious of the Sacred Heart had a women's section at Aurora University. They also had a middle school for Chinese students. They had an international school and they had a primary school. Our sisters were glad to give help. For a time there were 26 different communities living with these Religious of the Sacred Heart.

This Catholic organization saw that this was a chance to give the Chinese sisters more education because so many of the communities had brought their Chinese sisters with them out of the interior. They set up quonset huts and organized classes for teaching methods and different things. They also taught what the Religious of the Sacred Heart were teaching.

The sisters who came out from the interior, most of them had missions in other parts of Asia and they went on to those missions like in Japan or the Philippines--or they went back to their mother houses. But our sisters stayed on in Shanghai and so did the Sisters of Providence. There was one group--81 in all in the group--that had come down from Manchuria. They were one of the first to come and they were all Chinese--sisters, novices, postulants--and they were in Shanghai. Then about, well, maybe October, November of 1948 one of the priests in Shanghai who had been over to Taiwan came to our sisters and he said, "There's a middle school in Taiwan, in southern Taiwan, that is looking for sisters. The principal is a Catholic and she wants some sisters." So Sister Francetta and Sister Ursuline went over. They saw the place and wrote to Mother. Mother said they could.

By that time there were only three of them in Shanghai because three of us were in the States: Sister Regia, Sister Ronayne and I. Sister Francetta and Father Gerard Mack and Brother Alphonse Kepr went down first to Taiwan before Christmas. The others stayed to complete their term at Aurora University because they didn't want to break up their classes there. They went to Taiwan in January.

This school--who did it belong to? You couldn't say it belonged to anybody special because it had been a school that was started by Japanese Buddhist monks and had adjoined the Buddhist monastery. After the war the monks had to go. The Chinese government, of course, was taking over all the Japanese property. The people of Taiwan had been in the hands of the Japanese for 50 years, and the daughters of the people in Taiwan had been educated at this school. It was a lower middle school and a kind of vocational school--a tailoring school and so on, besides. The Taiwan citizens went to the new Chinese government and formed a board of 13 men and said, "Can we take over this school and continue it as a school?" They got the permission for it.

So then, as I said, the principal was a Catholic. She had been educated in the States at a sisters' school. So the sisters went down there. We could never own the property. We could never say it was our school because, you know, under the conditions! But at least it gave us something so that we didn't have to go back home. The three of us that were home could go down there. We didn't really take over running the school until in the fall of 1949 when we were all together. The term that the three sisters were there, they just taught English and music and let the school run as it had been run. But in the fall we took over.

We came into Kaohsiung with our baggage, the three of us, and one of the customs officials was a mainlander. He was very much interested where we were going, what we were going to do. We were hardly there a couple of days when he walked in with his daughter. Would we take her for the school? Then other mainlanders of the area came. They came

because they knew the sisters. They had had their children in the Catholic schools or Christian schools on the Mainland and they wanted it again.

When we took over the school in the fall for the three middle school classes, we had over 300 students and besides the vocational school. The school board had closed the dormitory which was simply Japanese rooms with mats--each student got a mat. They had closed the dormitory. Now we wanted to open it because all these students coming in wanted to stay. And so we did. We thought we would have about 24 and we bought beds, bamboo beds on the mats--we wouldn't have the girls sleep on the mats. When registration got over, there were 60 that wanted to be boarders. We had a full house for boarders all the time.

But before long there were letters from the American Consulate: Get out of Taiwan. Don't stay in Taiwan. Get permission from MacArthur to enter Japan.

I: Why were you instructed to get out of Taiwan? Why did they think Japan would be better?

MUEHLENBEIN: The Communists were threatening to take over Taiwan. MacArthur was in charge in Japan. There seemed no threat to Japan.

We applied and we got our permits to go to Japan. The consul notified us that our permits were there and we sent up our passports in January of 1950. A couple of months later sisters showed up at the consulate. When he saw we were still in Taiwan, he was furious.

In the meantime, two of our sisters had gone up to teach at National Taiwan University. The head of the English Department was the former head of the English Department at Fu Jen University--Ignatius Ying (Ying Chien-Li). When he was looking for English teachers, one of the fathers in Taipei told him, "Your sisters are down in Tainan." Ignatius Ying came down there. He talked and talked and talked until we said, "Okay, two of us will go <u>if</u> Mother says so." So Sisters Ronayne and Marietta had gone up to Taipei. We had two in Taipei and four in Tainan.

The two sisters at Taipei showed up at theconsulate a couple of months later. He thought we had taken the first boat out, but we weren't going to break up the school in Tainan and Sister Regia there. We started packing and we looked around for tickets. The boats were full and we wanted a boat from Kaohsiung so we could take our household goods. There were no boats from Kaohsiung but we got four tickets for a boat from Keelung to the north. So now, who was to go? Besides Sister Francetta and Sister Regia, it was decided that Father Mack and Brother Kepr would go. The other four of us would try to get a boat from Kochsiung at least a boat to put our baggage on in Kaohsiung. The four sailed from Keelung for Japan the first Sunday in June 1950.

Monday morning the man who was supposed to get us on a boat in Kaohsiung walked in and said, "Are you still going?" We said, "Well, yes." He said, "I don't think that boat's going to get to Japan. There's war. North Korea has entered South Korea." When the sisters in Taipei went to the consul, he said, "Stay here, stay here. I think those on the boat will have to come back." But they didn't. They got to Japan. Sister Regia and Sister Francetta got to Japan.

So Sister Ursuline and I were in Taiwan with all our stuff packed. The other two sisters were up in Taipei. They didn't have any personal things with them because the university had supplied the house and the furniture. What to do? What to do? Here was Mr. Ying from the English department from the university writing to me, writing to Mother: "Come on up here. Don't go to Japan. We can use you here." Finally by the end of the month, I said to Sister Ursuline: "Would you rather go to Taipei with the sisters there and teach there or would you rather go to Japan?" She said she would rather go to Japan. We moved all our house hold goods up to Taipei. The two of us went up and we divided the boxes the best we could. They had all

been packed for Japan. We divided the boxes and she got some of it and we kept the other. We got a boat for her and she went on to Japan. I went up to Taipei. So there were three of us at the National Taiwan University and three in Japan.

I: When the Benedictine Sisters and others were making the decision to leave the Mainland of China, was there a feeling that you were giving up your calling or that you were not willing to sacrifice on the Mainland for and with the Chinese?

MUEHLENBEIN: You mean when we left?

I: Yes.

MUEHLENBEIN: When it came to the Communists, we knew that there was no use. We just had to get out. That was all there was to it. And Taiwan was still Chinese; we were still with the Chinese.

I: Why was the situation so much different than when the Japanese occupied China?

MUEHLENBEIN: The Japanese had a government that could be talked with through diplomatic channels. Japan was not at war with the Vatican; negotiations could be carried on. The Communists had no government that the western world acknowledged. There were no ways of dealing with them diplomatically. The world had learned, or should have, what their methods were--that they were not to be trusted. The Catholic Church had had too many examples of what the Communists were apt to do. It would be sacrificing lives.

Our problem when we got to Tainan, when we first got there, was the fact that in the first place for 50 years Japan had owned Taiwan--Formosa. And the schooling had been in Japanese. They were not allowed to teach Chinese. So the people didn't know Chinese. The people were originally from Fukien. They spoke Fukienese. Any Chinese will tell you that you can't understand Fukienese. When we got there,

here were the Mainland girls with their Chinese which we could understand. There were the other girls who either spoke Fukienese or Japanese or both. And so it was hard. One of the girls said one day to one of the Mainland girls that was helping us, "I think she is a good teacher if I could only understand what she says."

But after a few years that was over. I know the mayor of Tainan, a Taiwanese; we got to know him and his children quite well. His oldest son was at the university in Taipei. When Sister Ronayne and Sister Mariette were there, he used to visit them. One day Sister Ronayne said to him, "Leonard, what did you talk at home?" "Well, to tell you the truth," he said, "my parents knew no Chinese. They were educated under the Japanese. We didn't know much Japanese, so we talked in a mixture of Japanese and English."

It was amazing how fast the people of Taiwan picked up the Mandarin and the English. I know around the corner from us there was a fruit store that I used to go to. They were Taiwanese. At first they spoke only what we called Taiwanese, but really Fukienese background. Pretty soon he could talk Mandarin and he was talking English. The first couple of years, even up at the university those students were having a hard time because of the language difficulty. You have your schools all in Japanese. All at once they were turned all over into Mandarin; that wasn't so easy.

I: What happened to your property in Kaifeng?

MUEHLENBEIN: Who knows? Nobody knows.

I: After the new regime came into power, were the Catholic missionaries treated any differently than the Protestant missionaries?

MUEHLENBEIN: You mean by the Communists?

I: Right.

MUEHLENBEIN: They all were jailed and sent out and tried and persecuted.

I: Was there any difference between the way the American Catholic missionaries were treated and the European Catholic missionaries?

MUEHLENBEIN: It was more of a crime to be an American than to be a missionary with the first take-over by the Communists. But after a while, it was being missionaries that was a crime too.

I: Were there any complications since the Catholics had been in China so much longer than the Protestant missionaries and had a chance to acquire buildings and properties? Were they held up more as a scapegoat or as an example more than the Protestant missionaries?

MUEHLENBEIN: I wouldn't know for sure, but I know for sure we were persecuted. Whether it was any more so than the Protestants, I wouldn't know.

I: Sister, when you returned to the United States for that home leave, what adjustments did you have to make upon returning since you had been gone all that period of time?

MUEHLENBEIN: I don't think there was too much, except that I was rather upset how little the people at home seemed to know about what was going on over there. We had been writing letters for years and things! I felt we had a broader view of things and knew more of what really the war meant and what was going on; the people at home didn't. You know the Americans can be very--what would you say--about things like that when they aren't next door to them.

I: Sister, were you ever able to find out what happened to any of your Chinese Catholics after the new regime came into power?

MUEHLENBEIN: No, we didn't. That's the pitiful part of it, you know. But I suppose by this time most of them are dead and gone.

I: As you look back at the time that you spent on the Mainland of China, what do you think that you were able to do particularly for the girls and the women in China? What do you think was the impact of your kind of work?

MUEHLENBEIN: It was giving them a chance for an education. At that time maybe they were not getting too much of it. It was still as it was in the States too for so long. The boys got the education and the girls didn't. But otherwise, I really don't know.

I have the story of one girl that was at our school in Peking. When we got to Taiwan, the sisters discovered she was there. She was married and she had two daughters. She brought her daughter Angela so that the sisters should teach her English. That was before I came up to Taipei. Angela was studying English with them and she got interested in the Catholic Church. She had more questions! Then she would go home and she would tell what she had learned. Her grandfather was living with them. He adored this child; he listened to everything she had to say. The father and the mother didn't mind that she became a Catholic. Her grandfather was baptized and oh, she was so happy. But her family had to be Catholic, her family had to be Catholic.

Then she and her sister were sent to Taichung where the Providence Sisters had a junior college. Her mother came in 1957. I know I was down there at Providence College when I heard, "Sister, Sister." Here Angela came running and put her arms around me and she asked, "Is my mother

going to be baptized at Christmas? My sister is." Her sister was at the school and she was baptized there. She hadn't seen her parents for three months because she was down there at school. At Christmas time her sister was baptized. Her mother waited until Easter as she thought by that time her husband would be willing to be baptized. But he was still doubting things and the mother went and was baptized. Whether her husband was baptized, I don't know. Angela became engaged and she made a Catholic of the young man. They had pictures of a beautiful church wedding.

One of our girls that was living in Hong Kong was married. Her son, I think, was 20 years old when she decided to enter the church and her husband and her son entered with her. I have a picture of the three of them being baptized. And this came about years later.

I: As you look back on the time that you spent on the Mainland of China, if you could do certain things differently, what would you have changed?

MUEHLENBEIN: You don't plan on changing things. You have to go with the tide. I mean that's one thing I've learned--to let things go. What's going to happen is going to happen. There's not much you can do about it when things change. People say this and that and that, but we never had a peaceful year out there that you could plan ahead much. It was always something from the time we arrived until now. In Taiwan, we are forging ahead, everything is fine, but I don't know whether they are going to give Taiwan to the Communists or not.

I: Sister, can you provide us with the backgrounds of some of your students or about some of the Chinese Christians that you know on the Mainland? This is one thing that often has not been preserved. Are there experiences that you can relate about some of the Chinese Christians that you knew and about some of your students, whether they be tragic, humorous...?

MUEHLENBEIN: I know, whether they were Catholics or whether they were Protestants, they were very, very true. As I said, the day we were moved to that first concentration camp, Mr. Chin wouldn't leave us. Mr. Liu showed up the minute he could help us. The Baptist women, their man wouldn't leave them. That morning we left that camp, everybody's Christians were there to move them out. That was something. There were a lot of stories at the time I suppose, but I don't know if I can think of any now.

I: Sister, after the new regime took over, one of the charges that was leveled against the missionaries was that of cultural imperialism--that they had taken away the Chinese identity. How would you respond to that?

MUEHLENBEIN: I don't think we were trying to change their culture. We were just trying to give them education and a better life. Many of the missionaries lived just like the Chinese. They ate the Chinese food; they lived in Chinese houses; they wore Chinese clothing. The fathers, their official clothing was the Chinese long gown. Our group of sisters adopted that too. When we went to Japan in 1956 we went into a shoe shop. The man pointed at us and said, "Chinese dress. Why?" We laughed and we said, "We are from Taiwan."

I: What did your dress look like?

MUEHLENBEIN: In those days we had the long habit. We had them made like a long Chinese I shang with the big opening buttoning down the side. Before we got to China, the priests or bishops had had a meeting in Shanghai. They voted to adopt the Chinese I shang as the official dress, with a little cross or something to indicate the priesthood. So there wasn't that problem with the priests that there was with the sisters because they were all dressed the same. At certain times they wore their original habit, like the Franciscans with their brown habits; but, on a whole, as you met the priests throughout China, they were dressed in long Chinese gowns.

I: When you moved to Taipei, what did you do? You began teaching at the university. Did you continue there through 1961?

MUEHLENBEIN: Yes. I taught through 1961. The sisters are still teaching at the university--three of them. We had private students. Oh, Mother couldn't get over it when she visited us. The students kept coming and coming and coming for private classes. Every hour they would be standing around in the yard waiting for a class to be dismissed, so another one could begin. English classes--I taught shorthand. I put up a sign for shorthand classes at the university and I had so many. Of course, they would drop out soon. They thought that was something they wouldn't have to work that hard at but when they found out they did, they would drop out. I took quite a few of them through different books. I had graduated from a business course after the eighth grade and then I finished my high school.

Two girls from Hong Kong that were living in Taipei came along and they wanted shorthand. So I took it up again and started teaching it and really had a lot of students taking it. The funny part of it was that they didn't always need it, what with the machines and the things they had. But to get a job they had to have the shorthand certificate. After they got to working in the office, they would maybe never use their shorthand.

Then in 1961 we opened the children's home. The nurse that had been with us in China came back and she wanted to open it. We had the children's home, which just closed a year ago, because there no longer was a need for it, as there had been. At first there were all these refugees coming in from the Mainland and they were very poor people. Now Taiwan economically is very well off. There wasn't a need for that home anymore.

Instead of the children's home, they have a retreat house now. Before that, they had a student center because so many of the students are from non-Catholic families, non-Christian families. The priests and the sisters liked to get them together in groups and away from their backgrounds sometimes for a day or two or three. The student center simply supplied a cook and bedding and they would bring a group out. This center is up on a mountain. From it you can see the Tanshui River and the Gulf of Taiwan between Taiwan and the Mainland. It's a beautiful place and the students love to come up there. That place is simply used all year around. Now they have this retreat house. They themselves moved into the children's home and turned their convent chapel over to the retreat house. That's what they are doing now.

In Taipei we had a hostel for about 50-60 girls and one in the country too. This was part of it. We were up on one mountain and down below is the Tanshui River. Up on another mountain across from us is the Protestant University. The Protestant's themselves asked if the sisters didn't have room for some of the students. They kept 15 boys and I don't know how many girls living on their mountain from the university. The people coming to the retreat house are not all Catholics. Protestant groups bring their people too.

I: What about the development of Chinese Bendictines in Taiwan. You mentioned very briefly about the establishment of an independent priory there.

MUEHLENBEIN: We should have more sisters, but we don't.

I: Why don't you have more Chinese sisters?

MUEHLENBEIN: My statement "we should have more sisters" refers to the amount of work there is for them to do. Formosa is a small island with a limited population compared to

Japan. Also there are so many religious communities on the island, all thinking ahead to the possibility of returning to the Mainland and all are training sisters for that contingency. All in all, taking into consideration all of the religious communities in Taiwan, I think there are many vocations, more comparatively than in the States right now.

If they are going to be independent, then they have to accept their own members; they train them and they have responsibilities for themselves financially, too. As it is now, of course, they take in the girls and they train them; but when it comes to accepting, the voting is still left to us here. What do we know about it? And to bring them over here, there is a language problem.

It is the same with Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico belongs to the United States, but Spanish is the language. I tell you I found that out! They bring those Chinese-speaking girls up here and try to train them in the novitiate and it just doesn't work. I went down to Puerto Rico about three years ago and spent some time there. Some of the sisters that had been trained at St. Benedict's I knew, but they couldn't understand me and I couldn't understand them. Their English had just gone out the window. The Bahamas is different. They are English-speaking, but the culture is still the British culture, not an American culture at all. In Japan, we had more girls join than in Taiwan. Whether it was the treatment of the girls by the men or what, there seemed to be more vocations all around in Japan than in other lands.

I: How many Chinese Benedictine sisters do you have in Taiwan right now?

MUEHLENBEIN: I really don't know. Eight or ten. There are two of them, two Chinese sisters, that have been teaching at St. Benedict's at the college. They are two of them that were trained here. How long they are going to stay here, and if they are going back, I don't know. But

they are staying here. I think they are applying for American citizenship. I don't think they'll join the priory there; I think they'll stay here.

I: When you have these independent or semi-independent priories in Taiwan or Japan, are there certain changes that they make in order to be more compatible with the heritage and the culture?

MUEHLENBEIN: We try to do that right from the start. For instance, when we go into church here, we genuflect. To the Japanese that means nothing. Since Vatican II that has been changed, the way they bow and the kneeling in church, too. In Japan, cremation is the ordinary thing. In Japan, that's permitted now, but it wasn't.

I: What adapatations have been made for Chinese culture?

MUEHLENBEIN: They have their services in Chinese now just as we have in English instead of Latin--the mass and so on. They have their own singing. What else would there be? For instance, here white is the color for marriage and baptism. Not to the Chinese. White is a mourning color. Red or pink, that's the color: not just as far as religious things go, but otherwise too. I think the Chinese are adopting more and more western customs in their marriage ceremony. So it's just natural for them.

I: Are there other adaptations that have been made?

MUEHLENBEIN: Ancestors mean so much to the Chinese. Homes have shrines with pictures of the ancestors. Offerings are made at these shrines. As the Chinese used to say, "You surround your coffins with flowers, put flowers on your graves. What is the difference if we put fruit, etc.?" The church now encourages this honoring of ancestors in the old Chinese style. There are special ceremonies for the Chinese church and Chinese homes, especially on the feast the church calls the Feast of All Souls, which is an honoring of all the dead. I think this means much to the Chinese.

I: When you were beginning the work in Taiwan, was there any trouble of crowding because there were so many missions who have moved to Taiwan at the same time and were trying to establish work in a relatively small space?

MUEHLENBEIN: When our first sisters went to Taiwan, there were on the island, I think, 11 Spanish Dominican priests and five Dominican sisters. One of the sisters was half Chinese; the others were from the Philippines. That was the entire Catholic personnel that was on the island. All the 50 years that the Japanese were there, they didn't allow more in. There were two Protestant missions: one in Tainan and one in Taipei. They were both Presbyterians; one was from Scotland and one was from Canada. There were no other Protestant missionaries. They had not been allowed in. Before I left in '61, there was a mission in every corner of Taipei almost.

I: Catholic and Protestant missions?

MUEHLENBEIN: Yes, when I speak of many missions, I'm referring to Protestant as well as Catholic. In a few years every Protestant denomination I had ever heard of, besides many I hadn't, were establishing themselves in Taiwan.

I don't know what the latest statistics are, but two years ago there were over 700 priests and 700 sisters on the island; more than half of those were Chinese. When Sister Bernard Marie, who is in charge of our novitiate, was home the last time, I said to her, "How many religious communities?" And she said, "33." I said, "How many have novitiates?" And she said, "32." They were all trying to train, hoping for return to the Mainland.

I: Did that create any problems when everybody was trying to build a mission right next to each other?

MUEHLENBEIN: I don't think so. In Taipei, as I said, when our sisters went up to Taipei for the first time, there were only those five Dominicans sisters. There was one church. It was right after the Japanese war. There was one church that functioned on Sunday. I don't know if there were other priests in the city. I looked the other day and it looked like there weren't. There was one Chinese priest that was teaching at the university. He said his mass at a Catholic home just near the university. Every morning our sisters walked a half hour to this home to attend his mass. Then they would go over to the university and eat their sandwiches and powdered coffee. That was all they had.

End of Side One - Tape Three

Up to that time Taiwan had been all one vicariate--what they call a prefecture. During the war the only Taiwanese priest was put in charge of the Catholic church because the Japanese wouldn't have the Spanish. The other communities started to come into Taipei. After I was up in Taipei, by that time a vicar had been appointed for northern Taiwan--Bishop Kwok. He couldn't be consecrated right away because it takes three bishops to consecrate and there weren't any. Finally about six months after he was appointed, he was consecrated. By that time I was there for the consecration. And I know one of the bishops came up from the Philippines; I don't know where the apostolic delegate got the other two from, but I know I was there for that consecration.

On the day that Bishop Kwok was installed, before he was consecrated--about six months before--our sisters, those two that were living in Taipei, were present. He asked them, "Can I open a chapel in your place for the people in that area?" The home belonged to the university. It was a small Japanese

house, but one of these places you could take out the doors and make the whole thing one big room. And so they did. He himself said the first mass there.

I remember after I got up there, he would say two masses on Sunday morning. The place was filled. People would take off their shoes before entering. One time I found a hundred pair of shoes in this little place in the entry. After the place was filled, I closed the gate. And Father said the mass. After the mass was over, I would unbar the gate and let those that were in out. But I wouldn't let anybody in until they were out. Then they would come in. In the meantime Father Fang would be standing at the altar with his vestments, waiting to start the second mass.

Then the Catholic Church bought a piece of property about two blocks from us and started building the church there. For the first two years, we had a church for that area right in our little house. Now there are big, beautiful churches there. The Jesuits have one and they have a student center. We have this hostel; the Maryknoll Sisters have a hostel for girls. Other sisters have come in. The Daughters of Jesus who took care of us in Peking, they are there now. All kinds of communities not only in Taipei but all over Taiwan.

I: I read that someone thought that there was perhaps a chance that the Catholics would be able to maintain their faith longer than the Protestants on the Mainland after the revolution. Can you see any reasons why this might be the case?

MUEHLENBEIN: Well, I don't know. I really wouldn't know. I do know that baptism does something. I remember a university student, a junior I think he was. He came to our gate one time. He was all upset as the Chinese get when something goes wrong in their love life; his fiancee had thrown him over. Oh, was that boy upset--he was ready to kill himself and so on and so forth. He had been coming for religion class and somehow or other he went to an Anglican priest and was baptized. Then he came back for a while. He got an ulcer, landed in the hospital and almost died. He came back for religion and wanted to be a Catholic. Then Sister Mariette would say, "Anthony is so different. Anthony never has any questions. He is nodding his head in agreement all the time. Anthony doesn't doubt anything." I said, "He's baptized and with baptism comes faith." She said that she was used to his arguing back and forth and so on. There was no argument in him. Then Father Fang, when he was ready to baptize Anthony, went to talk to the Anglican priest about the baptism. He did not re-baptize Anthony because he said that he was baptized. He just made his confession of faith.

I: In discussing back and forth with the Chinese, what elements of Christianity did you find they had the hardest time understanding? What elements were easiest for them to understand and accept?

MUEHLENBEIN: Of course, there was the fourth commandment: "Honor your father and your mother." That is typical, you know, with the Chinese--maybe not the newer generation, but it was with the older generation. Then the belief in the afterlife, that appealed to them. That appealed to them with their ancestor worship and so on. There was a lot of superstition in their old religion and that was hard to give up. Some of them would not remove their old pagan altars. They wanted the priest to come in and do that so that the devil wouldn't come to get them.

I: How was it for them to understand about the Pope and what the Pope meant? Was that easy for them to understand?

MUEHLENBEIN: I think so. I don't see why it should'nt be. They're used to authority.

I: How is the Catholic Church evaluating what has been happening in China since 1949? What are their responses to what has happened in the last 30 years in China?

MUEHLENBEIN: As I said, you just live for the day in China. You don't know what the morrow is bringing. You're hoping for the best. As I said, most of our religious orders are trying to train personnel so that if there ever is a chance to go back, they're ready for that. That is the point of all the noviates in Taiwan. But will they be allowed to stay in Taiwan? That is the question.

I: And what about foreign missionaries in China? Is there any work being done in the chance that foreign missionaries could ever go back to the Mainland?

MUEHLENBEIN: I think most of the preparation is in trying to prepare the Chinese. I know our community and our concentration now is on training the natives of the different mission areas we have, not to train other Americans to go.

I: Sister, when you look back at your years of involvement in the China area, what has this meant to you as a person, to your perceptions?

MUEHLENBEIN: I know from the rest of them around me that I am not so determined that everything has to come out the way you think its going to come out -- that everything is going to go smoothly. If it does, okay. If it doesn't, all right. That was something our community couldn't understand. Why? Why do you have to stay? Why do you want to go back when things were going the way they were going all the time?

I: And why did you? Why did you keep going back?

MUEHLENBEIN: As I said, "Once a missionary always a missionary." Finally, I had to give up and I thought that was satisfied. I knew I couldn't take it physically because I knew what that climate was like in Taiwan, a tropical climate; I knew that was no good for diabetes. I worked at St. Benedict's until a year ago for the mission.

I: What kind of work did this involve?

MUEHLENBEIN: I took over the editing of our mission paper. It had been called "Pax Orienti" because it was news about our missions in Taiwan and Japan. I changed the name to "Saint Benedict's Missions" and enlarged it to include Puerto Rico and the Bahamas. I also had a special little paper for the children in our schools. I visited the schools to speak to the children. I also spoke to church groups. In the summer months we were given seven or eight parishes where we could collect for our missions. In the first years there was a demand for clothing, etc., for the children's home, and I packed and shipped that. I also collected clothing for our Indian missions in northern Minnesota. The end of 1975 I phased out the paper; for since there were so few American sisters on our missions, it was hard to get news to publish. There was very much to do.

I: Sister, I have no more questions for the time we have left. Is there anything else that you would like to add to the document at this point; any incidents that you think would be particularly interesting to include on the tape?

MUEHLENBEIN: I almost forgot what points I already made. I might be repeating things. The days of the "old frames" are over. Sister Regia and I are here. Sister Donalda, I think she is still at St. Benedict's. She is very worn out, too.

Sister Ronayne keeps going in Taiwan, but I don't know how much longer. The new crowd takes over. We don't have any Americans left in Puerto Rico nor in the Bahamas. There is still Sister Mariette in Taiwan. She'll stay there since she's been there since 1947. Sister Ronayne, of course, will stay there in China: that makes about 50 years now. There's a third one there, but I heard yesterday that she has been told to come home. She's been given a job here. So that's only two for Taiwan. And Japan, there are two there. I know they are very determined to stay there, too. Whether they will or not, I don't know. We are gradually withdrawing our Americans. It's hard. Now like in Puerto Rico, they were all Spanish-speaking and "how" Spanish I found out a few years ago.

There were Americans there. That meant that there was always a double language. One of the sisters is supposed to have written that since there are no more Americans there: "At last we are a one-language people." She appreciated that. They could say what they wanted to say and everybody understood. When Sister Mariette first came to China in 1947, when Mother came over, just shortly before that a Providence Sister had come--Sister Ann Colette. Every time the two groups got together while Mother Rosamond was there, she was there for about a month, next thing you knew Sister Ann Colette and Sister Mariette were in a corner together. One day Mother Rosamond said, "There are those two together again." Sister Mariette said, "She still speaks English." What we were doing (and we weren't conscious of it until Sister Ann Colette called our attention to it) was mixing our Chinese and English together. So Sister Ann Colette said the first few days she was there, as she sat there and listened to them and here they were talking. Finally she said, "If you people don't talk English, I'm going right back home." So she and Sister Mariette got together and talked English.

When Sister Ursuline first came (she came after we were in Kaifeng) we got one of the university girls to teach her Chinese. One day she said to the girl, "What does 'can do' mean?" And the girl said, "Can do? That's not Chinese!" "Yes," she said, "the sisters are saying it all the time--'can do'." "Oh," the girl said, "that's English." Out there that was the expression that the Chinese servants used: "Can do." So we got into the habit of using that.

When Sister Mariette came with Mother, Sister Francetta and Sister Ronayne went to Shanghai to meet them. After they got up to Kaifeng, Sister Mariette said to me, "What does 'pu chih tao' mean?" And I said, "I don't know." "Well, that's funny. I heard Sister Ronayne use it. What does it mean?" And I said, "I don't know." A few days later Mother and Sister Mariette and I went to visit a Chinese sister's dispensary. Sister Mary went out to get some tea and Sister Mariette started again with, "What does 'pu chih tao' mean?" And I said, "I don't know." I even said, "Wo pu chih tao--I don't know. Ni pu chih tao--you don't know." Sister Mary came in and Sister Mariette said, "What does 'pu chih tao' mean?" Sister Mary said, "I don't know." Well, Sister Mariette was more confused than ever. We started going home in a ricksha, each one alone, going down the street. All at once in the middle of a wide street, Sister Mariette yells out,"Oh, you mean it means 'I don't know'." When we started talking Chinese, the others that came along, they didn't know whether we were talking English or Chinese.

Most of the missionaries, the fathers and most of the others, are dead now. Just a few of us left. Oh, the Providence Sisters I knew so well in the concentration camp! They were concentrated with us in our house from

January '42 until March '43. Most of those are dead and gone or else they're at the motherhouse and not able to work any more. So it's a whole new group. Well, maybe some day some of them will be going back to the Mainland--I hope.

I: Sister, thank you so much for your time and effort. We certainly appreciate it.